



Class B V 4501

Book . . 148

Copyright No.____

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.





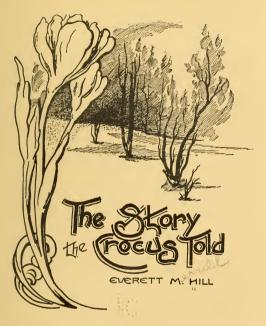
THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD







EVERETT MERRILL HILL



Nothing can rightly compel a simple and brave man to a vulgar sadness.—Thoreau.

Strengthened . . . with joyfulness .- Paul.

پي

The Uplook Publishing Company Spokane

The Lakeside Press Chicago BV 4501 H 48 One thousand copies of this edition of "The Story the

One thousand copies of this edition of "The Story the Crocus Told" have been printed for the profit of those who would be profited, of which this is No.

Copyright, 1909 by EVERETT MERRILL HILL First Impression December, 1909

Cover Design by R. W. Little, Spokane, Washington Title-page Design by Herbert Jackson, Spokane, Washington

DEDICATION

To the memory of my father, the embodiment of good cheer, whose brave heart never surrendered in a losing fight with fortune on a sterile New England farm; and to my mother, the incarnation of industry, whose heroic courage and unwearied hands never flagged in the ceaseless round of a self-sacrificing helpmeet bringing her beneficent offerings to the ideal home; to the memory of these great-hearts, who gave me, not a fortune, but a Faith,—this book is lovingly dedicated.





CONTENTS

				Page
I.	The Heart of the Flower		•	-11
II.	Under the Morning Star .			17
III.	When the North Wind Blows			25
IV.	Finding Hid Treasure .			33
V.	The Fragrance of Sacrifice			43
VI.	The Song of Creation .			53
VII.	The Roots of Life			59
VIII.	The Loadstone of Home.			79
IX.	Sunshine and Toil			93
X.	Play for Its Own Sake .			107
XI.	A Chat by the Wayside .	۰		117
XII.	Coming Back to Eden .			125
XIII.	The Enemies of Unawares			139
XIV.	The Crocus's Dream .			153
XV.	The Heart of the World .			163
XVI.	The Will to be Glad .			171

CONTENTS

XVII.	The Chariot of Gladness	183
XVIII.	Healing By-Paths	191
XIX.	The Magic of Confidence .	205
XX.	The Language of Two Worlds	213
XXI.	The House on the Rock	221
XXII.	Climbing and Singing	231







FOREWORD



NE day I was standing on Monroe Street bridge watching the Spokane River as it dashes over the lower falls and throws up a fine spray in

which the Great Artist hung a rainbow, when a young friend strode by.

"I measured that hole at the foot of the falls last year, when the water was low, and found it seventy feet deep," said he.

Think of it, a seventy-foot shaft bored into the living rock by the whirl of that frenzied water as it plunges over the precipice and hastens to the sea! How was it done? "Constant dropping wears away a stone," and here it does not drop gently but rushes tumultuously, using everything that comes in its way as a weapon of offense. Every drop of water, too, carries its sharp-cutting instrument, and every moment for these many, many years, this giant auger has been plowing its resistless way into the basaltic mass.

The power which blindly dug that hole in the rock during uncounted bygone cycles, a power which had to find expression somewhere, is now being used to light homes, iron clothes, and drive trains for the comfort and convenience of the citizens of the Power City. That is good, but that is not all. In the almost reckless onrush of life, every wave carrying its freight and weapon, both a transport and a man-of-war, the responsibilities and cares, as natural to our existence as gravitation to matter, have dug great furrows and caves in human hearts and faces: the mind concentrating its energy to this result as unconsciously as the triple falls in the heart of Spokane have hollowed out the rocky river bed. A great Engineer, some centuries ago, urged that instead of allowing this to happen the wise man would better use his energy for lighting his soul-house,

ironing out the wrinkles from his forehead, and guiding the trains of progress after having hitched them to the eternal power-house. That Engineer has been more or less indifferently heeded, but His is a good word, and happy is the man who has made it his own.

All our rivers flow with more or less hard water since they have traveled far from their soft-water source in the mountain lakes fed by the melting snows. The longer their journey the more silica they have gathered; and the more silica, the faster the cutting process. When it reaches the falls the Spokane River is quite soft, being comparatively near its source. a fact which offers a hint as to the vast stretch of time it must have taken to cut and gouge its flinty bed. Modern civilization is rich in intellect, hard with the gathered solutions of ten thousand years, heavy with the cutting instruments. The wild tribes which celebrated the potlatch on these shores lived long because they had not the double-edged sword of knowledge. To-day we have it, but we act as though our hands were not skilled in handling our weapon.

Like children unused to sharp knives we cut ourselves more than the object we would carve with shapely designs.

Men are saying that we live too strenuous a life, but this is not true. The strenuous life is the twentieth-century life, and we are children of the age. The strenuous life belongs instinctively to those who dwell beside the rushing river that does things, the river that breathes in acres of oxygen and gives out rainbow-barred sunshine while the work is being done. The strenuous life is the birthright of those who inhabit the wonderful city that toils on, confident and of good cheer, notwithstanding the unjust discrimination which, like shackles, selfish and jealous neighbors have vainly put upon her, to impede her progress. The strenuous life is the vital breath of all Americans. We should live as long as the aborigines, and longer, though we tackle titanic tasks in the twentieth-century spirit. And we shall, if our souls are buttressed with as strong masonry to resist the downward thrust of nature as is built to make captive to our commerce the wild waters of an impetuous river.





FALLS OF THE SPOKANE RIVER

The motive of this book is that those who scan its pages may be helped to accomplish modern tasks and yet not die of our modern diseases. May it prove as great a blessing to the reader as to the writer, not in making him less a worker but a more enjoyable one, on his own account as well as for "the other fellow," because he has discovered that the Garden of Eden is where the Crocus Elf points. And if the voice of this Hero of the Flowers shall succeed in arresting the attention of some of those whose hearts are breaking with the stress of our day, and arousing them to a more courageous and cheery life, the author will be abundantly repaid.

E. M. H.

SPOKANE, WASHINGTON.





Out from the heart of the Crocus,
There leaped to my heart a song;
It was as though an angel
Had borne the word along;
And its message drew and held me,
Until my soul was strong.



I

THE HEART OF THE FLOWER

S I went out into my garden, one fresh spring morning while the season was young, I was startled by a golden gleam from beneath my feet.

"Is this the 'yellow peril' we have heard so much about," thought I, "or a thrust from the scepter of the ruthless rule of gold?"

But the sheen of a golden cup reflected against a snowdrift soon told me that neither Mongolian gems nor mammon greed had produced this saffron hue beneath my window.

"It is the Crocus," I exclaimed, "the hero of the flowers," and I would have embraced my visitor. But being forbidden this privilege, I reverently bowed the knee. My worshipful thoughts, however, were interrupted by the voice of the flower, which is so low that its color-wave of vibration measures only about one fifty-thousandth of an inch, as low as the voice of conscience! But being neither color-blind nor conscience-deaf, I heard the still small voice.

CROCUS: "You wonder at seeing me, but I am the messenger of Spring."

MAN: "I know that, my hero flower, but how could you be so brave as to face the frost and snow, the biting wind and pitiless storm?"

CROCUS: "Inner peace is worth the price of outer discomfort. Ease tempted me to stay in my warm earth-nest, but Life said, 'Go forth and fulfil your destiny.' We do not live for ease of hand and limb, and heart's-ease comes not then, indeed. There is joy in overcoming if with joy you overcome. No snow is cold enough to chill the glow that makes my petals golden, because my heart is glad. Spring's messenger was I created to be by the hand which lit yonder sun that glints the eastern hills, and whose fingers stretched the blue up there through which the stars smiled at me be-

fore you came forth to bid me welcome. And should I not be what I was created to be? If not, what can I be? If not, why am I at all?"

MAN: "And yet I do not understand. Your voice is clearer than my brain. Men do not often do what they are commanded, or, if so, not as blithely as you. What is your secret? May not a man be as great as a flower?"

CROCUS: "It is just as easy as looking up. The earth draws down, but the sun calls from the sky. My root is in the earth, but my heart seeks the sun. I follow my heart. I do not stop to think how hard my task, but do it. Brooding over the defeats of vesterday and the dangers of to-morrow makes you weak. Thinking of the victories won, and how you shall conquer gloriously when the new day dawns. makes you strong. I will not think bad thoughts. They may come like a cloud, but they cannot enter, for my will guards the door. I will not doubt my friends, though only the faces of enemies are before me. Clouds may hide the sun, but my heart says that they have not destroyed my king. When the storms howl

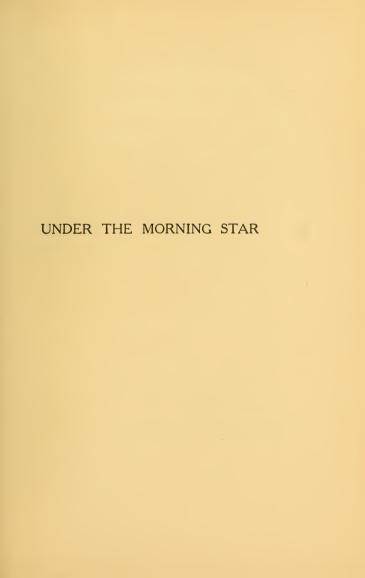
by your window you may still hear my voice in song."

MAN: "So frail you seem to be, and yet so strong, wonderful flower!"

CROCUS: "The number and strength of the enemy do not bring defeat, but your own fears, and a new fear is born every time you think in its terms. I will trust and not be afraid. Would you not better? I will think only in terms of success. Will not you, too? I have no closets for skeletons, but every one holds a living, singing elf. You say you believe in angels, but why do you dwell with imps?"

MAN: "And may happiness, like an angel, dwell with a man as the elf of joy with the flowers?"

CROCUS: "Hardship is the shell of joy to the great-heart, and all may be noble who would."



While under the stars with God,
To the flowers my sins confessing,
I lost for aye the task, "to plod,"
But received the grace of "blessing."



II

UNDER THE MORNING STAR



LL that day the words of the Crocus rang in my ears. Nothing could drown them. While at my desk the golden corolla swam before my eyes,

and every petal had a tongue that spoke. In the noisy traffic of the busy street as it rumbled by, like the shadow of a rainbow, or the undertow of the tide, there was the persistent voice of the hero of the flowers. When night came the sermon of the morning returned in my dreams. It is little wonder, then, that with the first faint gleams of dawn, while yet the morning star shone brightly, I was again in the garden seeking for a further revelation from my new-found prophet.

MAN: "Wonderful flower, your words will

neither let me work nor sleep. 'All may be noble who would.' How can this be?"

CROCUS: "The will, the will, son of man, is the secret. The throne-room is sometimes used for a stable, but it was furnished for a royal palace."

MAN: "The will! I had always supposed that religion took away one's will and that faith was the rule of life."

CROCUS: "There has been a mistake somewhere. Of course you must have faith in the Eternal Father whose image you bear. That is as necessary as that light comes from the sun. I would not have you have less faith but more will, and when both are present in full power there need be no failure anywhere."

MAN: "But it is not possible for all men to have faith."

CROCUS: "It seems ungracious for a flower to contradict a man, but I must do so. All men have not faith, but all may have. If faith has not come to you through heredity there is always the will to believe."

Man: "The will to believe! You startle

me again. I imagined that one had to believe what his intellect assigned as proper."

CROCUS: "No, not so. Again the flower shall lead you into the right. Men are creatures of prejudice. This is both their weakness and their strength, their weakness when it inclines to the wrong, their strength, when right is the loadstone. It is not the intellectual difficulties that make doubters and infidels, but heart hurts and disappointments. The intellect and the heart are but servants of the will whose command commissions to point out the good. show what is best to believe. Here is where the betraval too often takes place. The heart, because of pique, persuades the intellect to point out the wrong road; the will drives that way and the wreck of faith and usefulness is the result. But the well-balanced mind looks up and sees that the pole-star of his life is the open mind, free from all narrowing prejudices. Because he beholds this he also sees that the very foundation of his existence pre-supposes an Eternal and All-Wise Creator and Lover of his soul. And then he wills to do what that

One demands without reference to circumstances, since he is sure that the Lover-Judge of all created things will do right. If you will follow out the doctrine of the flower you will find that the highest longings of your nature will meet and make friends with the loftiest ideals of the race."

MAN: "But may I bring this wonderful philosophy into my daily life? Can a man make a business of his religion as the flower makes the gift of perfume and beauty the sole object of its existence?"

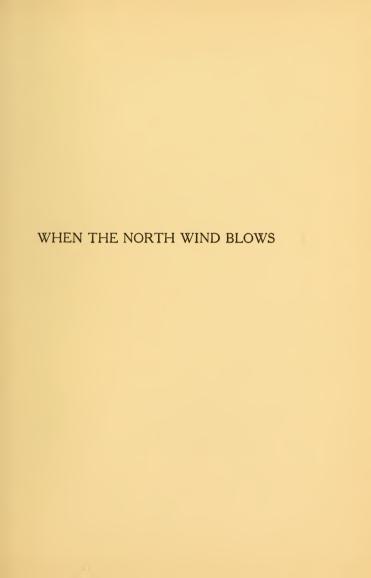
CROCUS: "To produce joy and peace ought to be the ambition of every man even as mine is to give forth beauty and fragrance. Joy may be nourished anywhere. A snowdrift under your window did not forbid my smiling at you from its shadow. Shall not a man be as great as a flower? The harder the ground is frozen the more golden my petals become in the battle to cut my way through. You too shall find the greatest victory in the hardest battle."

Man: "But why have you told me all

these things, Crocus? Why have I, the least of all my brethren, the great honor of knowing your wonderful secret?"

CROCUS: "Because I saw that you were not too proud to listen to the least of all created things. I have yet more to reveal to you before my story is done. But this secret is not for you to keep, for if you try to hold it for your own, you shall lose it. Go tell all men that in any and every situation in life, under all circumstances and everywhere, there is an opportunity for joy if they follow my lead. Tell them that hardship is but the shell of joy to the great-heart, and all may be happy who will."





Flower in the crannied Wall
I pluck you out of the crannies,—
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand;
Little flower, if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

Tennyson.



Ш

WHEN THE NORTH WIND BLOWS

"Happier the thrifty blind-folk labor,
With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbor!
"Tis looking downward makes one dizzy."

THE words rang out from the chapel across the way where a devoted woman was teaching a boys' choir. Like an echo of the music the voice of

my flower friend struggled through to my consciousness.

CROCUS: "The universal heresy is looking downward."

MAN: "I know, Crocus, but why?"

CROCUS: "Why is it that the river runs down the incline of its mountain-side bed?"

MAN: "The only reason I can give is that

25]

of the scientist,—because it is natural for water to seek its level."

CROCUS: "But that is no answer. Why is it natural for water to seek its level?"

MAN: "I do not know."

CROCUS: "Art thou a lord of creation and knowest not this? Because there needs to be a strong current for life to breast that in its overcoming it may continue to be life. When the north wind blows, face it. The bird mounts on the contrary wind. When nature's thrust is downward, resist it. Strength comes from conflict. The promises of two worlds are only 'to him that overcometh,' as you would know if you read more carefully a certain Book in your library. There is no reason why water could not have been given properties that would have made it flow up the mountain side even as there are gases which rise indefinitely. But it pleased God to constitute this most valuable liquid so that the pull of gravitation should send it headlong down canvon and mountain gorge. But having led it, with swift footsteps, to the hungry sea, the

sun's strong horses, harnessed to great cloudlike caravans, soon cart it back again. Have I not seen you, in your younger days, and many others like you, eagerly watching the sun's long line of water wagons as they wound up the steep incline of the eastern sky? 'The sun is drawing water,' you curtly explained to the unthinking and the blind. The rumble of those great wheels over the hollow rim of the sky, the cracking of the long whip of the fiery driver above the arching necks of his coalblack steeds, and the splashing overboard of some of the cargo, ever and anon as the axles jolted in passing a particularly bad piece of road, have aroused the ambition and fired the soul of many a lad to lift great loads and climb high. I know, for the soul of the boy is like the soul of the Crocus."

MAN: "Go on, teacher mine. You are shriving my soul."

CROCUS: "The moral purpose of the universe is to develop life. With this motive at its center you can see that it is not only deadly to look beneath but it is health-giving to look

aloft. It is health-giving to look up, as it takes effort to do this and all effort brings results. Individual effort is the absolutely indispensable thing in life. Activity means health; inaction, disease. The dead fish float down stream; the living fish swim toward its source. And because this finny creature of the deep essays the rapids it continues to live, to exert energy, to swim against the current. Life is a circle. The power to do any one thing depends not only on doing it but continuing the undertaking."

MAN: "What a dumb creature I am! And it took a flower to tell me that the fish, whose flesh has often nourished my body, had a word that would strengthen my soul!"

CROCUS: "Even so. Men are masters of creation whom all created things would serve in their struggle upward toward the heavenly places. But in their very eagerness to reach the goal they overlook some lowly hand outstretched to help. The fish has a secret to impart from its realm as the Crocus from his. The whole universe has myriad voices for the listening ear. The reverent soul

WHEN THE NORTH WIND BLOWS

'Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, Sermons in stones and good in everything,'

as certain also of your own poets have said. The swimming of the fish upstream is but a suggestion of the way you are expected to travel. This creature bids me tell you that to him life is not a desert waste but a mighty river with a strong current, and he who succeeds must breast the flow, struggle against the tide, conquer nature. And you doubtless know that the nature to be conquered is not to be found in forest jungles alone but in the wildernesses of the soul, where some men wander twice forty years and never find a stable government. But it is the glory of a man that he may become victor over nature both without and within."

MAN: "To become victor within! 'There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed."

CROCUS: "Truly so. While the continents are rapidly becoming occupied, the soul of man has much outlying territory that is a veritable terra incognita. There may be men seek-

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

ing the north pole who would do well to make strenuous search for the undiscovered country within their own natures. From this unsurveyed region encroach the wolves and tigers which ravage the flocks, and the little foxes that spoil the vines."



Flowers are love's truest language; they betray
Like divining rods of Magi old,
Where precious wealth lies buried, not of gold,
But love—strong love, that never can decay!
Park Benjamin: "Flowers Love's Truest Language."



IV

FINDING HID TREASURE

MAN: "I have taken your gentle hint, Crocus, and am reading my Bible. On every page I find lustrous jewels. But over in Nehemiah I un-

earthed a veritable treasure chest. Surrounded by all manner of valuable things, in its very center I discovered this wonderful chain of gems: 'The joy of the Lord is your strength.' What a rosary is this, and it has been lost so long! And yet it was not hidden to people passing near. Though twenty-four hundred years have toiled by in solemn processional they have, like priest and Levite, passed by on the other side, and we humans have gone with the crowd."

CROCUS: "It is wonderful with what little 331

difficulty men lose the good. But this wide gate, swinging so easily on its hinges, is nature's downward invitation. There is a subtle pull and gravitation toward the underworld for both of us, but there is also a call from among the stars to come up higher. The only difference is that I heed the sun's command, but man drowns God's voice in his useless noise and fuss."

MAN: "I am beginning to see this. But, to go on with my experience, my discovery became linked in my mind to another, a century or more before Nehemiah's time, the discovery of the 'Book of the Law,' as recorded in the Chronicles of the kings of Israel. With hundreds of priests, scribes, and temple servants to care for it, the sole rule and guide of the nation was lost. No one knew where it was and, more, no one seemed to know there was any such thing in existence. One day, after two hundred and fifty years of heedless disregard, when the temple was being cleansed and repaired by the good king Josiah, Hilkiah the high-priest, came to Shaphan the scribe and

said, 'I have found the Book of the Law in the House of the Lord.' That discovery wrought a nation-wide reformation. This fact of ancient history would be of little significance to me were it not that at this very hour a similar thing exists among us. That wonderful book, the Bible, the source of civilized man's riches and greatness, has a place in every home; its text founds every pulpit, its story builds every church, its doctrines fill all literature, and its gospel is recognized as the hope of the race. And yet, in the midst of it all, its central theme has been lost. I would that my discovery might arouse us as Israel was aroused on that other day."

CROCUS: "What a splendid vindication you have given me of my theory that time in itself is powerless to change man's nature any more than that of the flower. Since that sad day when man's eyes were turned downward and he lost his bearings it has been hard for him to look up. All the centuries between then and now have not made it any easier. Man's nature is the same. But you have dis-

covered a key that will unlock the door of hope to all mankind. 'The joy of the Lord is your strength.' Does it make your heart glow and nerves thrill? But that is what it was meant to do. If you can get mankind to build this precept into their souls you will revolutionize society. Tell them that it is not the bitter lament of Job's comforter. Eliphaz the Temanite, 'Yet a man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward,' that they need, but the cheering words of the king's cup-bearer, 'The joy of the Lord is your strength.'"

MAN: "O Crocus, if it only could be true! You know that the Bible teaches that we must repent, be sorry for our sins, and deny ourselves daily that we may be counted worthy to enter in. Then, too, the prophet announced that the Saviour was to be 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' How shall we reconcile these things with what you say?"

CROCUS: "I see you still have a protest to make before surrendering to the sunshine that shall drive all the clouds away! What you

have said is true. It is good and necessary to be sorry for sins, but when godly sorrow has brought forth true repentance, why should you sorrow more? Because you did not start in the right way sooner? But sorrow will not change the past. About the Master being a man of sorrows I am familiar, for some of your theology floats out of the window and lodges on my petals! While the seer beheld Him as such and the vision was fulfilled in his life, yet He did not accept it as His mission to men. He did not proclaim gloom and sadness. Zacharias prophesied that He should be 'the day spring from on high,' earth's sunrise of God, and you believe that He fulfilled this prediction as fully as the other. Moreover, He is recorded to have wept but once. Could any living man match that? The most of you, if all vour tears were put up in a bottle as David prayed the Lord to do with his, would fill to the brim more than one large-sized flask. You have discovered the secret of life. Renounce. then, your sad-faced philosophy, put on gladness as a garment, and thus surpliced preach the Gospel, the Good Cheer, to men dying of gloom."

MAN: "But what about the devil, Crocus? Is not he strengthened in his rule by merriment and mirth?"

CROCUS: "'Resist the devil and he will flee from vou.' Laughter is no more the devil's instrument than the sweet-voiced violin. Genuine joy creates the strength of resistance. Human counterfeits of this blessing intoxicate for the time and leave weaker than ever. 'The joy of the Lord,' not of lost souls, is your strength. But in truth there is no joy, 'there is no peace, saith the Lord, for the wicked.' The fact is that you men do not want to get rid of the devil, and any excuse is sufficient to forestall the necessary effort; you have never made a united attempt to that end. And, too, the human race wastes enough energy in sighs and vain regrets to whip this arch-demon out of civilization and off the planet. Why do you do it? Because it is easier to surrender than to fight; because it is easier to look downward.

and you take the course of least resistance. Like water, you are ready to seek your level."

MAN: "It is all too wretchedly true. We are a race of opportunists."

CROCUS: "But is your level beneath? Has not water in its journey from ocean to cloud a lesson for you? Is not the secret of Jesus Christ's power His readiness to allow the Deity above the clouds to draw Him thitherward? If the prophet, looking downward according to human methods, called Him a man of sorrows, shall you, therefore, refuse to accept the divine method of looking upward, which He so gloriously vindicated? If the shell of life be rough and broken may not the heart be healthy and sweet?"





Aromatic plants bestow No spicy fragrance while they grow; But crushed or trodden to the ground, Diffuse their balmy sweets around.

Goldsmith: "The Captivity."



V

THE FRAGRANCE OF SACRIFICE

A

GAIN I walked in my garden as the morning star faded. The flower prophet had stirred me to the depth. Like Isaiah of old, I too was receiving

my call and consecration, only, instead of the seraphim as the agents of Jehovah, the modest lily was speaking to my heart. I waited for a word from my new-found friend, but in vain. There was no speech, no language, nor any utterance from among the dainty flower-folk.

"Or," thought I, "perhaps my ears are too heavy this morning, and while the message is spoken it does not reach me. The teacher is giving instruction, but the pupil's dullness forbids it admission." Suddenly, from the very depths of my soul a voice seemed to say: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full." I was startled, and thought, at first, that it was the Crocus. But the voice was different, and at last I decided that Memory was speaking.

"The modern mind is like a sieve and cannot hold its contents long. We pay too high for the pencil and note-book, the typewriter, and loose-leaf ledger. When the 'blind old bard of Scio's rocky isle' sang his matchless epic there were a multitude of rhapsodists who could and did repeat the song from city to city, singing the story as he gave it to them, reproducing it from memory without hesitation or mistake."

Thus I mused with myself. "But it must be," thought I, "that through the influence of the Crocus, whose bulb holds all its past in its treasure-vault, I am to have brought back to my mind the truths that shall strengthen me to do God's bidding."

"I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy

transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us."

"Fear not: for I have redeemed thee."

"The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Like arrows from an unseen archer these golden shafts came winging into my consciousness. As one after the other they took lodgment in my heart, is it any wonder that I should grapple with myself in astonishment and cry out in the language of Israel's sweet singer, "Why go I mourning?" "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" "Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness."

MAN: "Crocus, I must speak to you, now, and tell you how my memory is awakened, I doubt not, through your fragrant influence, to the fact of joy in human life. I remember that

the angel's message at Messiah's birth was: 'Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.' And the angel chorus took up the strain until the heavens resounded, and the reverberations have never ceased to ring around the world. I remember that the wise men from the east 'rejoiced with exceeding great joy' to find the babe of Bethlehem. I remember also, when He had reached His matchless manhood, that John the Baptist speaks of Him as a man of sorrows but as one entering into the most joyous relation in life: 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the Bridegroom which standeth and heareth Him. rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."

CROCUS: "Since joyful memories have opened your heart to my words, do you speak to me, for you must know that 'The Lily of the Valley' is father to my life, and His story is sweet to me."

MAN: "I remember Jesus' own words: 'Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be

turned into joy.' And in His great prayer just before the last great struggle He prays that His disciples might have His joy fulfilled in themselves. How utterly we have misread the Gospel if we think of Christ as sorry that He had to undergo the cross and shame for us. While the flesh shrank from the hateful gibbet vet it was the deepest joy of His existence, the very wine of His life, that it was His privilege to be the Saviour of the race. He gave His life a ransom for me, not grudgingly but gladly, with a joyous abandon. His lips might twitch as they touched the cup, but His whole being was exultant as He drained it to the dregs. The ecstasy of His soul is indescribable to us earth-dwellers, for we have not been through Gethsemane. And having tasted the shame and agony He could turn to His disciples and say, as the victory throbbed through every vein. 'Now ask and ve shall receive, that your joy may be full."

CROCUS: "But so it was all along the way. His joy was ever full."

MAN: "I remember that the early Church, 47]

too, ever dwelt upon this great thought. Life to the fathers was a deep and blessed thing. 'What matters a little trouble in the flesh?' said these great-hearts. 'It is but for a moment. This is the hour of the prince of darkness, but His hour cometh.' And then their songs of praise made grove, or cave, or catacomb to ring again. They had, indeed, overcome the world with their Master. So they 'took joyfully the spoiling of their goods'; they went to the dungeon, the block, or the lions with shouts of victory. They had obtained joy and gladness and for them sorrow and sighing had fled away."

CROCUS: "'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.'"

MAN: "I remember how Peter speaks of the 'joy unspeakable and full of glory,' and Paul takes pleasure in reproaches and persecutions for Christ's sake. Writing to his followers he urges: 'Fulfil ye my joy,' for, says he, 'I am filled with joy.' I remember how James talked of 'counting it all joy' when temptations come, and the way Jude closes his little book, which, even though it is so short, must echo the same thought, 'the exceeding joy.' I remember all these things and now that I speak of them I marvel that I ever forgot them."

CROCUS: "In what mazes and labvrinths of tortuous turnings have you mortals been wandering that you have so mislaid your strong-box with all its hard-earned treasure? Men imagine life to be sorrowful, but death alone has that distinction. With all the rest you will doubtless remember that your Master once said: 'I am come that ve might have life and that ye might have it abundantly.' But His idea of life is that it is a thing of beauty and a joy forever. But fragrant flowers cannot grow in underground prisons, neither is the joy of life found by living down in a dark, dank cellar. Iov comes unbidden when you climb the sun-lit highlands. 'Tis looking downward makes one dizzy,' but looking upward, struggling upward, with your face ever toward the sunrising,—that

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

makes clear-brained and strong because it makes glad. Do you, therefore, climb to the summit with God; and there is glory in the heights."



Plundered, beaten, stripped by a band of savages, five hundred miles from the nearest human help, Mungo Park tells how he flung himself down under the blazing African sun to die. As he lay despairing, a tiny bead of moss caught his eye. It was no bigger than the tip of his finger; and yet as he looked at the exquisite shaping of its roots, leaves and capsule, he asked himself whether the Mind which planned and sheltered and brought to such perfection of beauty that tiny bead of moss could forget him. The tiny speck of vegetable life had for him the office of a prophet, it spoke to him with prophet's lips. "I started up," he said, "and, disregarding both hunger and fatigue, travelled forward."

W. H. Fitchett: "The Unrealized Logic of Religion."



VI

THE SONG OF CREATION

MAN: "We may not gild refined gold but we may inquire whether it is as valuable as men say. So I would not attempt to crown joy but ask

what is its true place in our world? A plant may teach a man, for your species has lived longer than mine."

CROCUS: "Joy gave strength to the right arm of Jehovah as He hammered out the hinges of the universe on the day of creation; it inspired the song of exultation to the rhythm of which our Lord Creator laid the corner-stone of the earth 'when the morning stars sang together'; it buttressed the heart of the world's Redeemer as He climbed up Calvary's hill of death."

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

MAN: "But may the joy of God be man's?"

CROCUS: "As the sap to the stalk and root of the flower, so is joy to man. It is the blood of his soul, and 'the blood is the life.' Without joy, your life is abnormal and unhealthy; with joy, it is full and strong. Without joy, life is 'weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,' barren of fruit and withered with the blight of death; with joy, it is rich and fruitful, wholesome and unafraid."

MAN: "If we may trust the sacred writers, you are a better expositor than the average theologian who puts this virtue in about the third place. The Bible uses the word 'joy' over a thousand times while 'faith' falls short by two hundred and 'love' reaches only about half this number. The Crocus's emphasis is the Bible's emphasis. It is 'with joy that we are to draw water out of the wells of salvation.'"

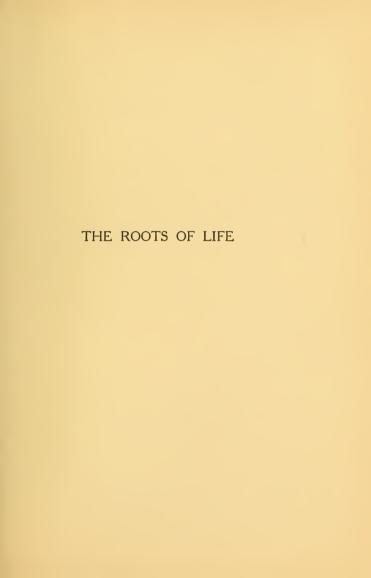
CROCUS: "As the joyful life is the blessed life, so what can be more sad than the joyless life? For this means the loveless, faithless life.

Would you go to meet your God with an empty soul? But what makes a full, rich life? Does a fat purse, or large possessions? Can the cattle on the hillsides browse along the banks of memory's stream? Will the song of the dollar make music in the innermost recesses of one's being? Is the tenement with its narrow court and low ceilings, its rags and despair, the best original for paintings to be hung on recollection's walls? No, the Crocus guide leads not this way. 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' The story the Crocus is telling you, which was made the text of many of the Master's sermons, is re-echoed from every lawn and flower-plot. The flower is your true logician, seeking first the Kingdom and knowing that all the rest will be added. The heart of the Crocus is glad not because he has a cup of gold, but he has a cup of gold because he is glad."

MAN: "Since I have met you, Crocus, every tree and flower and blade of grass is a prophet of the Most High."

CROCUS: "Then let me not shun 'to de-

clare unto you all the counsel of God.' Is your soul lacking in gladness? Then you are poor indeed, though rich as Dives in gold and silver, in stocks and bonds and lands; a pauper in all those things which go to make true riches. Your poverty, too, has come openly, publishing its approach, for you have wilfully neglected the sure means of building up your fortune, the means given so lavishly to the child. But if wonder-working joy is treasured, if not only the child but the youth, the young man, the man in his prime, and he who steps with the caution of long years down the western decline shall each sacredly guard the power to laugh and be glad, then this life shall return to its Giver full and complete, rich, strong, and abounding. For joy is the master-builder. Cheerfulness adds the good and subtracts the ill. Gladness girds with strength. And strength, how good it is! In God's good strength you shall overcome, and when the overcomer knocks, the eternal doors swing wide for him to enter."



Flowers preach to us if we will hear.

Christina G. Rossetti.



VII

THE ROOTS OF LIFE

ROCUS: "'The joy of the Lord is your strength.' You made a splendid discovery when you brought this word to light. But have you, as

yet, put it to practical use in your daily tasks? Do your new-found riches make life more delightful? If not, then you are a miser. There is nothing that is valuable unless it be valuable in use."

MAN: "I must say that my treasure is as yet rather unreal, a sort of dream without much but hazy splendor and rainbow glory. But, Crocus, you have opened my eyes and unstopped my ears, doubtless you will be able to revolutionize my whole being."

CROCUS: "With your careful attention I

shall hope to do this. The primary meaning of the word 'strength,' as you well know, is to reinforce, to buttress. Just now, on your way home from the city, you passed over a bridge. The steel trusses that you saw there make the real strength of the structure. Without these it would hardly bear its own weight. By means of these trusses the bridge is braced against itself, as well as against the piers at the two ends. and so is equal to any load. Your life is a bridge that stretches between two worlds. With the gladness of God to brace your soul, the bottomless chasm beneath is safely spanned. Trusses of joy annealed from the heart of God will make your bridge equal to any burden. But failing in this reinforcement your bridge will collapse and fall hurtling into the nethermost depth."

MAN: "Oh, teach me well, that I may escape this danger!"

CROCUS: "Let me use another analogy. In your great power reservoirs you build mammoth dams to hold back the tremendous volumes of water that are necessary. These restraining

dams are always comparatively narrow at the top but widen as they descend until at the base they are several times broader. Thus buttressed they are able to withstand the mighty pressure that is there. Your friend Nehemiah thought of joy in just this way. The joy of the Lord is the buttress of life. Without it you are an unsupported weakling, a naked soul. With it you are like a great dike that holds back the sea. A storm rages in mid-ocean, but as the breakers beat like a besieging army against your fortifications you smile at their rage. Your soul is buttressed to God and is strong. The crises of life shall not disturb you."

MAN: "May God give me such buttressment."

CROCUS: "We shall see how He will answer this prayer by looking into your physical basis of life. Your body is a wonderful building that needs much buttressing. If its mission allowed it to stand like the pyramids of Egypt it would not take much hurt from life's little day. But the difficulty is that history does not make on the highways that pass by but in the

courts and anterooms, the apartments and passageways of the edifice itself. Baggage and food-stuffs have to be carted through its entries, and there is danger that in handling the crates and cases the furniture may be marred, or the plastering knocked off. Friends and enemies. too, will pass each other along the landings and stairways, but they must not provoke strife. There may be street brawls without, but there can be no altercation within; and the faces that look out at the windows must always reflect the sunshine. 'That there be no schism in the body' iov should traverse it as unhindered as the blood runs red through the veins. If all the functions of the body are exercised without friction there will be abounding pleasure in living. This is the delight of health. But the 'oil of joy' sloughs the sand out of the bearings and gives health the right of way."

MAN: "I am listening with my whole soul."

CROCUS: "Health is the inheritance of both men and flowers. We creatures of the garden are never sick because we know how to eat. You mortals have digestive troubles without number, not by reason of what you eat, but because of why and how you eat. In the first place it is wrong to eat simply to live. You would better live to eat if you had to choose between the two alternatives. Think of endeavoring each day to sort out the foods that shall give the proper chemical elements to the body! That is not your business. Trust your digestive functions and cease to try to help them in their task. Your help here is a hindrance. I allow my roots to choose and sort the mineral foods that are to be taken into my system. I have no fear that they will appropriate the poisons that belong to the dining table of the deadly nightshade. Let your taste do the same for you."

MAN: "I am finding not only beauty and perfume but wisdom in the flower."

CROCUS: "You take your eating too seriously. Make your dining table a recreation, not a task. As self-consciousness blights your powers in the pulpit, so body-consciousness will destroy the food values for you. And the latter is the chief bane of your physical existence.

The functions of your body are secretive and. like a timid child, overmuch attention abashes and destroys their powers. Do you not remember, when a boy and there was company in the parlor, of being pushed into the august presence, and when the organs of speech refused to perform their accustomed functions, of being asked, 'Have you lost your tongue?' So any of the bodily faculties may be paralyzed by too much publicity. There was far less dyspepsia among you before you understood so well the methods employed by the digestive system and the necessary chemical elements needed to support life. Your far-famed healthfoods have created more diseases than they have cured."

MAN: "Surely this golden Crocus is to make the waste places bloom if the dining table is to be redeemed."

CROCUS: "I have spoken of how the taste is the judge of what is good for you. The sense of taste is the sentry at the door of your fortress of health. The palate is the arbiter and what is relished is to be eaten and nothing more. But

having partaken of foods most agreeable let them now be enjoyed. The time element must enter in here. Taste them and continue to do so until all flavor has gone from them. Allow each morsel to linger a while near the gateway whence it entered, giving an opportunity for the arbiter to extract the full reward for his labor. and do this with no thought of wilfully aiding the digestive apparatus, but for very enjoyment's sake. Your great statesman Gladstone used to bite each piece of food thirty-two times in order to masticate it thoroughly. Gladstone was a great nation builder, but I protest that his statecraft showed more wisdom than his method of keeping body and soul together. His dining program smacks too much of slavery. Indeed, the result he sought is reached in the indirect way, and many of the best things of life are obtained as a by-product."

MAN: "I remember that Saint Paul directed: 'Eat what is set before you, asking no questions for conscience' sake.'"

CROCUS: "True; and the boasted wisdom of your day has not outrun this injunction. It

is not so much what you eat as the enjoyment that is put into it that makes it beneficial. That dyspeptic's bane, mince pie, is not so harmful as the determination so many people have to make it live up to its record. As the Midianites were defeated before ever Gideon led his three hundred invincibles against them, so the dyspeptic's stomach throws up its hands before its owner sits down to the table. The unfortunate individual has served notice on his digestive system that it is to receive an invasion it will be impossible to away with. Then he follows up the suggestion by tumbling a whole meal into his alimentary canal, dessert following pièce de résistance and entrée with reckless disregard, as the coal man shovels his load into the cellar chute. Is it any wonder there is a gastric derangement?"

MAN: "I am learning more about the source of health, from you, Crocus, than my family physician ever taught me."

CROCUS: "The night is coming on, and I am glad, for look with me up there along the Milky Way. Do you see that little cloud on

Orion's sword-hilt? I have heard you read how that cloudy substance is the star-dust out of which the planets and suns are made, and that the process of world-building is still going on. Is it not a glorious thought that God is still working, building new worlds out there on the circle of the heavens, and you and I can see Him in His workshop? But while the heavens readily declare the glory of God a certain earthly occupation is so far from this as to make angels weep. It is for you to teach men that this must not be, that the dining table is a divine institution where God is also building up the processes of existence which form the vehicle of a life that is of so much more value to Him than all the suns and stars that there is no comparison; for the mystery of digestion is as marvelous as the miracle of world-building."

MAN: "As I cannot help God build a world up there, no more can I assist in rebuilding this body by laying profane hands on its delicate functions. Is this your meaning?"

CROCUS: "Yes; but you can mar the rebuilding here by those same profane hands.

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

All this marvel and mystery must not be borne in upon you while you are partaking of the satisfying viands. This must be wholly disregarded. Forgetfulness is to be your motto now. forgetfulness of everything but the pleasure of eating. You should talk, of course, for it is wicked to eat alone. You may even gossip about your neighbors, provided they be used gently as you hope to be dealt with. You will laugh, relate anecdotes, saunter along the highway of memory, plucking the fruit from the overhanging branches. You are thankful. natural, care-free, even careless, eating for the joy of satisfying your healthy appetite, and yet, withal, utterly unconscious of that fact. You do not hurry for, if time is money, food also may be thus designated. What is lost in time will be saved in the amount of food, for the longer you eat, comparatively speaking, the less you will need. Doctors' bills, too, will be eliminated, for

> 'Joy, laughter, and repose Slam the door on the doctor's nose.'"

MAN: "Truly, Crocus, it is strange how often the means becomes the end to us mortals. I suppose it is not so with you who live the real life that God designed for you. I am sometimes inclined to believe that the only aim and object of the city street-car system is for the individual car to get to the end of the line. At least so it has seemed on the many occasions when I have failed to catch my car. And when you think of it, that is just the way most men eat. With them the principal thing is to get through."

CROCUS: "I know friends of yours who are afflicted with nervous dyspepsia and ordinarily are very careful about their diet who, when they attend a banquet comprising all sorts of so-called indigestible foods, eat everything that is set before them and feel no bad effects. The reason for this is that time is given for each morsel to be enjoyed, since, between the mouthfuls, the soul is fed as well. Here laughter and joy have their rights, and the liver, which would do its task in secret, is forgotten and in this forgetting is unconsciously given the finest tonic in

the world—gladness. 'A merry heart is a good medicine,' as your wise man of Israel truly said, 'but a broken spirit drieth up the bones.'"

MAN: "That these things are so is as certain as that the fragrance of your petals delights me. But why is it so? Why all this haste? Why is it so difficult for man to eat his food with calm gladness, unhurried and unafraid?"

CROCUS: "It is but the recurrence of nature's downward thrust. Wild beasts are provided with gastric juices that dissolve and digest unmasticated food, raw, living, quivering flesh that they have torn from their prey and bolted whole because there was no time to do otherwise if they would get their share of the booty. Hunger is one of the primal passions. Men have it in common with the lower animals, and they are healthy, physically, in proportion as they have appetite. But like all fundamental passions it defeats its own end by its unreasoning haste. Appetite would eat much, but its rapacity makes it eat little and denies all enjoyment in the eating. Appetite crowds every other function to get its meed of nourishment, but its very importunity harms itself, for life is a unity and all the faculties are proportionately blessed or defrauded by the actions of one. Appetite is blind and blindly follows need; but without intellect and conscience to guide, the blind will lead the blind and both shall fall into the ditch. But here is man's opportunity. In the very resistance of this natural passion in its animal, or irrational characteristic, is to be found the chance to add to moral and spiritual stature. That a man is tempted to run wild is no more reason for his yielding than that a flower should turn back to become a weed."

MAN: "Then you would make every impulse downward but the scaffolding for building another story to our character building?"

CROCUS: "Emphatically. Every one of the primal passions which you have in common with the brutes that perish, has not only the element of preservation, self and racial, but in your species there is the added item of pleasure. For example, the sense of smell in the brute exists that it may minister to his hunger by leading him to his prey, or to his fear by guiding him away from those who would prey upon him. But in man this function has lost much of its power of sensing those things which are solely for the bodily comfort or safety. Rather, the olfactory nerves minister to the beautiful in mankind, to the esthetic, to the spiritual nature. You enjoy us flowers because of our beauty and fragrance. The sweet incense of spring feeds the imagination, the earth itself pours out a rich perfume from the new-made furrow, and every tree of the forest gives a sweet though delicate odor to the nostrils of man and his soul is enriched thereby."

MAN: "You would teach me that appetite in the realm of food and drink must give an opportunity to minister to the spiritual as well as to the physical?"

CROCUS: "The larger its contribution to the spiritual, the better it will serve the physical."

MAN: "This is an ideal worth striving after, but we are very far short of it."

CROCUS: "You are far short of it, as your

patient wives too well can testify. How absurd, indeed, for these good women to spend hours of toil and many horse-power of nervous energy in creating delicious foods with the thought of tickling your palates and making eating an exquisite delight, if their husbands are to bolt the toothsome morsels as though they were bitter medicines to be rushed past the portals of taste without arousing the sentry!"

MAN: "Our sin in this particular is very great."

CROCUS: "Yes, it is great. Among you mortals the dining table seems to be the last place to come under the control of the rational nature. In many a home the meals are but regularly recurring spasms that might be called 'nightmares while you wake,' so unsatisfactory are they to both housewife and the hurried mortal who eats and runs away, not that he may live to eat another day, but that he may go through the motions of living and satisfy, in a measure, that physical conscience called the stomach. His perplexed wife looks on with clouded and anxious eyes at the three times per

diem feat of her husband and wonders if 'hash' would not as readily suffice as her carefully prepared and time exacting ménu. I doubt not she wishes that she belonged to the apostolic succession and might preach a sermon on eating, the text of which would be, 'Tell me how you eat and I will tell you what you are.'"

MAN: "And Paul tells us to do our eating religiously: 'Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.'"

CROCUS: "And the great Christ, too, taught that eating is one of the divinest institutions of human existence. He made the taking of food and drink in companionship with kindred spirits the last and most striking monument of His earthly pilgrimage. He lifted it up from the plane of the trough to the heavenly places and showed by His own example how beautiful the dining table ought to be, a place of comradeship and love, of genuine joy and goodfellowship. If you will take a little time for your meals, and with your family and friends put gladness into them, you will discover that that much-abused organ of digestion which has

fallen so into disrepute in the last days, will gather up and do its work in such a way as to make your earthly existence both a pleasure and a benefaction. Because the cave-man had to follow the lead of the brutes in their neighboring jungles and fight for every morsel he ate is no sign that haste should be the chief point in modern table etiquette. Men and women who have learned to say 'Our Father who art in heaven' have time in which to enjoy the blessings of eating and drinking, since they may safely trust their good God and Father to give them their meat in due season. As long as the shadows daily lengthen across the hills mankind may confidently rely on their Maker. His promises are sure."





Sweet letters of the angel tongue,
I've loved ye long and well,
And never have failed in your fragrance sweet
To find some secret spell,—
A charm that has bound me with witching power,
For mine is the old belief,
That midst your sweets and midst your bloom,
There's a soul in every leaf!

M. M. Ballou: "Flowers."



VIII

THE LOADSTONE OF HOME

AN: "Good morning, Crocus, friend of mine. I have a good report to bring to you. My wife and children tell me that my associations with you

are doing me good, since I am making my meals a comfort to them where before they say that they were not even a pleasure to myself."

CROCUS: "I am glad if I have helped you so soon. But you are in good company in your family fellowship. To gather about the board was one of the delights of the early fathers. When a man finds that the dining table is central in the physical life he will have discovered the home, and that were a discovery worth while. You who are a deep student of history will bear me out when I say that to sit under his own vine and fig-tree was one of the

deepest instincts of the Hebrew race, the most wonderful race of antiquity. But your own clan, the Anglo-Saxon, is not one whit behind in the homing instinct. When I speak of the home I am not referring to the dwelling that happens, for the time, to act as a shelter, but of something deeper. To you who boast that the blood of Hengist and Horsa flows in your veins there is an indefinable something that attaches to the thought of home. It is conceivable, in fact, that there may be no dwelling: no roof to shut out the curious light of the stars. or walls to protect from wild winds or savage beasts or still more savage men. Its habitat may be a humble tent, or a mansion with ceiled chambers. But whatever or wherever it is. there is there a secret, spiritual thing that thrills the soul."

MAN: "I am beginning to understand."

CROCUS: "Are you then enjoying your hearthstone? Few things affect you for good outside of those which you enjoy. But remember that it is not the four walls of the house

that shall delight you, since absence or presence of wooden or other walls and partitions has little to do with the meaning of your earthly haven. A lion may have a lair and a bachelor a den, but it takes a man, a woman, and a child also, to make the home. No one of these alone is equal to the task, but all the family together, bound in the sweet thraldom of a love that is stronger than death, create that sacrament called by you the home. Where pure love exists, relationships are always sacramental."

MAN: "But how far short of the sacrament some of our homes fall."

CROCUS: "The more need that you shall bear my message to men. There was a time when people imagined that they could love their families too much, make idols there and place them before God. There is little danger of this. If one person has ever been taken to heaven because of too much love bestowed upon him, ten thousand have made the leap into the beyond starving for affection. The modern difficulty is that your sacred home is

deteriorating into a mere house or apartment where several persons live together but have little in common except the name."

MAN: "Again I must plead guilty for my race. 'Israel doth not know, my people do not consider.'"

CROCUS: "But you will not any more sin against your family. You will enjoy them, take time to do so. You will make plans whereby your home is not left with such unceremonious haste in the morning. If you have been in bondage to your business, well-you will refuse that task hereafter. Let chattel slaves lodge in the dark hovels of medieval times, but let modern manhood reign as king. The serf who was chained to his plow needs not to be the prototype of the merchant chained to his desk. The soul of the thrall who toiled amid the oaks of early Britain may have been freer than is he whose heart is locked within steel vaults with golden ingots, and the son of the modern captain of industry may inherit a more binding thraldom than the heir of that ancient bondage. Do you, then, beware lest the liberty of the individual of to-day shall mortgage that of the child of to-morrow, and the ancient implements of servitude, with new names but the old intent, shall reappear upon the necks of your children."

MAN: "I feel as though the sins of my people rested upon me and you were digging up briers from among their roots."

CROCUS: "I speak to the race through you. The greatest need of the home, which is a world in miniature, is not so much a business administration, than which there is nothing you moderns affect so assiduously, as an administration of sweet gentleness and Christian love. It is incumbent upon you, on whose shoulders have been placed the responsibilities of other lives, not only to give place to love as an incident but to work at it as a task. And it is a task with heavy obligations, but in results it is wondrous light; its yoke is easy, exhilarating the soul rather than bowing it down. There is both a science and an art, a theory and a practice of love. Most folks have the theory, but many have not applied it to practical life. The theory may be spun out wide and never cover an aching heart, but the practice, while not so poetical, smooths out the wrinkles and finds the sweet along with the bitter. I saw a man who wrote poetry about his wife's rosy cheeks and then let them grow wan with neglect. I saw another returning with eager footstep to the holv haunts of home. He is such a one as is described by one of your great ones: 'The domestic man, who loves no music so well as his kitchen clock and the airs which the logs sing to him as they burn upon the hearth.' Before he has had time to push open the side gate there is a shout from within and his boys, vaulting out like unbroken colts, climb upon his back, his girls leap into his arms, while the good wife. with cheeks aglow, throws kisses to him from the door. This man has 'solaces which others never dream of.' I knew without being told that that father and mother made chums of their children. I knew without court witnesses that those children would never need the attention of the truant officer. I knew without information from Mrs. Grundy that that man, though he might not be able to write rhymes about the roses on his wife's cheeks, could put them there. Without any less show of affection at the funeral, a little more beforehand would comfort the living and not harm the dead. If you desire to answer the atheist, know you that it is the living present crowned with the loving heart that proves the existence of the living God."

MAN: "O, Crocus, how true you speak! God help me to make men see."

CROCUS: "Now and then it seems as though a family was ordained to be a burden and an anxious care. But nothing is farther from the thought of Him from whom every family in heaven and earth is named. A family is a treasure-box of joys. But too often the mother alone realizes the riches that are there. You fathers should come into your God-given inheritance. You should be the playmates of your boys and girls, entering into their sports with real pleasure. God gave them to you to keep you young, to hold back the body from decrepitude by forcing you into the romps that bring back again your forgotten childhood days.

You must take time to enjoy your home, or else perhaps, like riches, it will take to itself wings and fly away. You must also take God into partnership that you may not only be playmates, but priests of heaven to all that dwell beneath your roof. To romp with father and mother and then to pray with them, what could mean more to your sons and daughters? If by taking anxious thought you cannot add one cubit unto your physical stature, by taking loving, faithful thought you will add many cubits unto vour children's soul-stature. mothers, aspire for and with your children. Aspiration is a great builder. Blessed is that father who would climb alongside of his boys and the mother who builds air castles with her girls. Blessed are those children who can look into the future through the eyes of a good father and mother, for they have a tremendous advantage over others. The top is not so far for them. They started part way up the ladder."

MAN: "While you have been speaking, Crocus, I have been thinking that many a rich man is a bankrupt as far as his family is concerned. I can think of nothing so bad as the bankrupt home, the home into which a splendid reserve was placed at the organization of the company, but which was dishonestly used to carry outside securities. I heard a story the other day of just such a case. A successful business man tells how his father kept a stone wolf with a slot in its back on the kitchen shelf. All the money from the produce of the farm went into that wolf and later was invested in land. This father of a large family was ambitious to be a great landed proprietor. order to carry out this ambition, the mother worked ceaselessly, doing all the housework alone, as the money to hire help must go to feed the wolf. At forty she was an old woman. She would sometimes ask the privilege of a holiday. a little trip to the city, but she was denied for the sake of the wolf. She used to long for a book or magazine to read, or a chance to hear a lecture or enjoy a musical entertainment.for some escape from the deadly barrenness of her life: but when the cost was considered the

wolf got the money. She begged that her children should have an education, but the father's ambition could not be sacrificed. From every standpoint the home life was hard and cruel. After a while the overworked wife died of a broken heart, the boys grew up ignorant and reckless, and the land that had been bought with the lifeblood of the mother and sons lost its value because the railroad did not pass that way. The father had sacrificed his whole family for an ambition that was blighted at last."

CROCUS: "But suppose it had been satisfied. Suppose this man had become the proprietor of a great landed estate with his family the price in the bargain, what had he gained? What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own household? Money, money, you mad men, what is it worth if it cannot buy comforts for your loved ones? But what an opportunity is the family for an investment of cold, dead dollars with the sure result of rich and happy hearts! But 'only he who sees takes off his shoes' that he may run

and grasp that god of fortune by the forelock. 'The rest sit round.'"

MAN: "May I have my feet shod with seven-league boots that I may be swift to overtake all good fortune for those I love!"

CROCUS: "From the standpoint of the Roman slave-market, money incarnated in human flesh brings larger returns than that turned into swine's flesh. And vet when Jesus healed the wild man of Gadara the owners of the swineherds gathered from far and near and besought Him to depart out of their coasts. They preferred the maniac in the tombs, crying and cutting himself, provided their stock was safe on the hillsides, to this poor creature sitting and clothed, and in his right mind, at the price of a herd of hogs. Thus Rome and Jerusalem are brought into odious comparison, and the heathen city is found guilty of the lesser sin. In proportion as the idea of God becomes abstract and He Himself is established far away on the threshold of the universe, out of reach of men's personal and business affairs, the worth of man is reduced. Even Jupiter. hurling his thunderbolts from Olympus, endowed with all the weaknesses and passions of human kind, is preferable to a God who is but an abstraction. The Lycaonian city was more ready to fall down and worship when the man, impotent in his feet, leaped and walked at the word of the preacher, than the prejudiced religionists who believed in God but forgot men. And it may be that the city which sat on her seven hills would have repented in sackcloth and ashes had it had the opportunity of hearing the preaching of Him whom the Kidron capital crucified."

MAN: "And He was God incarnated in human flesh."

CROCUS: "And happy is he who realizes this and knows that because He has proved that God can dwell in human clay it is the supreme task of every father and mother to sacrifice everything to the cultivation of the divine in their children. The home was designed to be the anteroom of heaven. May you make it so that your children shall not wander forty years in a wicked wilderness before they shall discover the gate of pearl."



The hallowed lilies of the field In glory are arrayed, And timid, blue-eyed violets yield Their fragrance to the shade.

E. C. Kinney: "The Spirit of Spring."



IX

SUNSHINE AND TOIL

NE morning as I was digging about my flowers I was especially struck with the way these beautiful creatures put in their time scattering their

fragrance. Unconsciously I burst out with "My, but you splendid things, how you do tend to business! And you seem to like your work. But who wouldn't enjoy scattering such sweet odors and reflecting the sunshine? If we men had as pleasant tasks we, too, could keep busy and never get tired."

For all that I had had so many conversations with the Crocus I was somewhat startled when his voice reached me through the mist of incense that he had helped to raise.

CROCUS: "The reason the flowers enjoy their work is because they do not stop to won-

der why they do it, but just obey their Maker's command. It is not the kind of work that makes the worker glad but the spirit with which it is done. If you work for one you love there is no hardship in it. It is this spirit that makes it so natural for my fellows to scatter their fragrance. And when once you work out of love for one you love the meanest task will soon become pleasant."

MAN: "Tell me more about this, Crocus. My kind needs much help here."

CROCUS: "The last time we met we were talking of the home. We found that your Master believed in sacrificing everything to the making of manhood. But there is no possibility for the development of manhood unless you have an occupation. 'If any man will not work neither shall he eat,' is the command of your Bible, but it may well be added, neither shall he develop a strong character. Sweat is a necessary adjunct to human life. And to enjoy one's work is the only royal road that has ever been built up the steep mountain of success."

MAN: "And my people worship success." CROCUS: "There is that man who lately occupied the President's chair in this great nation. To him work is a delight. When he was congratulated on becoming a private citizen where he would have less of the burden of the world to bear he showed his strong jaws in a broad smile and said, 'I like my job.' That is why it became so hard for you to give up having him sit in the White House for another term,—you would almost have put him there against his will,—for he made it a genuine pleasure to serve you."

MAN: "I love that man, for he knows how both to be tender and severe, and he does not know what fear is."

CROCUS: "You must have an occupation, you must enjoy it, and you must expect that the way must sometimes be rough and dangerous. Paul was a better and stronger man because of the thorn in the flesh. Be determined to enjoy whatever comes. I would not have you play at your work, but that does not mean that the sun may not shine through your office,

or shop windows. Joy is a real requisite for success everywhere, and so here. A man with a small capital but a large stock of good cheer will succeed where a morose man with large holdings will utterly fail. You cannot defeat a man who is filled with joy. He may go down under the fierce onrush of brutal circumstances seemingly combined to destroy him, but if he keep his good cheer he will come up on the crest of the next wave serene and unconquered. The peace of his soul has saved him. Gladness cultivated until it is second nature is an unfailing adjunct of success, and one's unconscious power is worth well-nigh the conscious energy he expends."

MAN: "Then you teach that good cheer is the best part of a man's stock in trade?"

CROCUS: "Assuredly, and ill humor is like a fire in the hold of a ship; it will certainly sink her. The spirit of melancholy and gloom that will undermine the nervous system will also clog the channels of trade. A sallow face will tinge the most prosperous calling with a saffron hue. The mind complexion will soon be the

business complexion. Your business will be what you make it. The image and superscription stamped upon it is the likeness of the man who manages its affairs. Its spirit is his spirit. Is it an oppressive atmosphere that hovers over your desk? Is the thought of the daily grind uppermost while you are at the store? Do you enter your office door in the morning as a slave driven to his task? Then there is something wrong, and either you or your business will soon be carried out on a stretcher. Bankruptcy of fortune or health is the only outcome to such a situation."

MAN: "But may it not be possible, Crocus, that a man may be in a business that is not congenial to him, and yet be unable to get out of it? How can he enjoy what he does not like?"

CROCUS: "I do not believe in such a situation, but if there is no help he can at least enjoy it for the pleasure he has in using the profits for his friends and loved ones."

MAN: "I am glad you spoke thus, for I find some who are in this situation. I have

received help here from the words of a friend who has a lecture on 'Feeding Hogs.' I had a curiosity to know how he handled his subject, and when I asked him, this is what he said: 'I saw a farmer friend of mine feeding his herd of shotes he was fattening for market and said to him, "That's interesting business you are at." He looked questioningly at me, supposing I was joking, but seeing I was serious he said. "Interesting business! I don't see anything interesting in feeding hogs. I want to get out of the unsavory job." But,' continued my friend, 'I began to remonstrate with him and remarked, "Why, you don't want to get out of this work. It's a first-class business. See here. You feed the hogs and then haul them to market, and with the money you give your daughter a musical education, your son a college and professional training, and your wife anything she wants. Why, listen, I can hear the Hallelujah Chorus coming out of that pig's throat right now, while he eats! And don't you see the silk dress and sheepskin hanging on to that other hog's back?" 'My friend stopped a moment as a gleam of humor mounted to his eyes, and then said, 'That man got his eyes opened, and the next time I visited him he shouted at me before I could get out of the buggy, "Say, parson, I can hear the Hallelujah Chorus from the pigsty now myself!"'"

CROCUS: "That is just the point. If your occupation is not the best in the world, at least you can take pleasure in it because from it is to come the wherewithal to bless your loved ones and save the world. But I still insist that you must enjoy your business, if it is morally clean, and if not you should abandon it at once. You must enjoy your business, for this is but self-preservation, which your scientific friends declare is the first law of nature, though for my part I have my doubts of this."

MAN: "Still I am learning from the flowers beneath my feet. I believe my garden is more productive of great thoughts than my library!"

CROCUS: "In business there is the temptation to think small, mean thoughts. It is often said that business must not be hampered by considerations of character and happiness, since cold, commercial principles can have no dealings with the inner, soul life. But this is all wrong. Because we are ever finding the recurrence of the law of all existence which ever pulls downward, and business is not exempt from this universal condition, is not proof that man should not resist its influence. Every spring the golden crocus throws down the gauntlet to your race of worldlings as it pushes up through the frozen ground and, through the ice and snow, smiles at the sun. Where there's a will there's a way. It is a matter of the choice of the individual combined with a determination to reach the chosen goal. The oft-repeated excuse, 'But it's so hard!' is no reason. The difficulties of life form the occasion for the vertebral column in man. Were there no loads to lift or obstacles to overcome, a notochord would do as well. After God had canvassed the whole brute creation and found no fit companion for Himself, He said, 'Let us make man in our image.' But He did not make him perfect and complete out of hand. He set His

image in his soul and sent him forth to reproduce that likeness in his life. In the relationship of man with man in the commercial realm is found a most magnificent field for the development of this image, since it presents the most and severest tests. The great kings among you are discovered like Saul of old, 'hidden among the stuff.'"

MAN: "The test of life is always the builder of life, then?"

CROCUS: "You have declared it. The man who is out in the world, meeting all sorts and conditions of men under all the varying circumstances that the highway of life affords, is beset by every temptation that is common to the race. He is ground between the upper and nether millstone of savage competition and commercial intrigue. He is tossed like an autumn leaf betwixt Scylla and Charybdis, the jagged rocks of another's encroaching selfishness and the maelstrom of his own personal ambitions. He is gripped like a vise between the law of life and the facts of life. Such a man in such a position, if he shall achieve what his soul de-

mands, must be a hero. And a 'hero is the man who is immovably centered.' I must quote back for you what you read to me just a few days ago. You remember how in the 'Sea Voyage' the brutal Juleta comes at the brave captain and his goodly crew, now helpless in his toils, with:

'Why, slaves, 't is in our power to hang ye.'

To which the valiant master replies:

'Very likely,

'T is in our powers, then, to be hanged, and scorn ye.'"

MAN: "Self-trust is the essence of heroism."

CROCUS: "Yes, when that self is trusted to Omnipotence. With faith as uncompromising as the Himalayas heroism is no strange phenomenon. It makes common souls uncommon and toilsome roads luminous. It frees your men affairs from the swaddling clothes of commercial hysteria. What cares he for the incidental wave that smites his bark? It is some passing gust, a momentary frenzy of the dying tempest. There is no terror for him in

all the wilds of the world, for he is a citizen of the Kingdom, and the continents and hemispheres of time are but mere islands in the eternal ocean, and he knows and has fellowship with the One who holds them all in the hollow of His hand. Does his bark sail some strange waters there is no fear in his soul, for says he, 'Are not all these the seas of God?' If he be on a journey over a rough road through forest jungles where dangers threaten he laughs and declares, 'We are still on the King's highway!' When his friends speak of enemies he calmly says, 'But I have a friend at court,' And so his face ever reflects the glory of the morning. It is as though you could hear the song of angels in the echo of his voice, and the glint of seraphim's wings in the shadow of his smile. Will that man fail? Not unless God fails."

MAN: "And what shall I say to this?" CROCUS: "Rather what shall you do? Go and do likewise."





Day stars! that ope your frownless eyes to twinkle From rainbow galaxies of earth's creation, And dew-drops on her lonely altars sprinkle As a libation.

Horace Smith: "Hymn to the Flowers."



X

PLAY FOR ITS OWN SAKE



""All the world's a stage

And all the men and women merely players.'

Does that sentiment meet your idea of the mission of the

human race, Crocus?"

CROCUS: "Not at all. If mankind has no higher aim than acting a part the flowers are greater than men, for they do not give the mere movements of their bodies to the world but their lives. If I were to put man's mission into a couplet I would say,

'All the world's an arena,
And all the men and women contestants for the prize.'"

MAN: "Well said, my hero flower. But I should expect this from you. But would you 107] not allow us to play sometimes, have a little recreation between the contests?"

CROCUS: "Most certainly, for I have found in my observations that men are but boys grown tall and 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy' after forty as surely as before fifteen. And this is as it ought to be since recreation is but re-creation, rebuilding, and the fearful strain of your modern life demands the rebuilding process to be put to use most generously at times."

MAN: "But are we not going to extremes in our exploitation of systems of physical exercise?"

CROCUS: "Doubtless, as in the matter of health foods, and operations for appendicitis. You mortals are strange creatures. You are not very lamblike in temper of mind, but you are in your readiness to flock and follow the crowd. When certain things become the fashion in food, clothing, or even in surgery there is no use to combat it; the multitude must be satisfied. So it is in the matter of scientific physical exercise. But the body does not need

just so many tensings and relaxations of the muscles daily as it needs the exercise that comes through play. A man may practice calisthenics in his sleeping apartment morning and night as conscientiously as he 'says' his prayers, and it will do him about as much good. One needs to enjoy his physical exercise as well as his devotions. And what can be more enjoyable than to get out of doors in the fresh light and glory of God's great world and have an enthusiastic game of base-ball, tennis, or even passive croquet? It is the pleasure that counts in physical exercise, and that is the secret of all beneficial sports. When in a fiercely contested game you can enjoy a hearty laugh at defeat or victory, you have won against death."

Man: "You have touched a responsive chord, Crocus. To leap from my desk, snatch the racquet, and rush off to the court to throw my whole soul into a splendid game of tennis,—that is glory. Golf, too, is interesting. It especially has attractions for men along in years like John D. Rockefeller, and those of much avoirdupois, like Mr. Taft. Mr. Roose-

velt, too, is a tennis enthusiast. To him golf is a sort of elderly lady's game! But I enjoy all true sports."

CROCUS: "One of the chief reasons why the beneficial results of outdoor sports are so certain is the fact that these games are not designed to be played by solitary individuals. The partnership idea is what makes the hardest trial of life endurable and the happy experiences transcendently glad. It is your being thrown together to laugh at and with, to enjoy each other, that is ideal. That is why God 'setteth the solitary in families,' and no man dares to say that this is a mistake."

MAN: "I have thought how good it would be if everybody would take some time every week just to play. If there was a uniform plan of Saturday half-holiday, what a blessing it would be. But I suppose certain of us would begrudge the time and find some odd job to do. We are so afraid that we shall not wear out. But I do not believe that there will be many Americans rust out, do you, Crocus?" CROCUS: "There is a greater wrong than that you just hinted at, and that is the slavery of too many wives. They drudge and toil from early morning until near midnight. They have no opportunity to read or sing, or do just what their impulse directs for the moment. They are slaves to husband and children, become old before their time, and develop into soured and scolding wives. And it is all because they have no recreation. There is a woman over across the street from my plot who never thinks of looking at a flower, she is so busy tending babies and cooking dinners."

MAN: "Yes, Crocus, that is the sad part of life. But while we men are selfish and ought to protect our wives from such a fate, I wish you could arouse womankind to take her recreation whether the house gets swept or not. The proprietor of a great store or the manager, when he wishes to go to the base-ball game, does not wait to see if his desk is clear of work. He picks up and goes. I wish women would do this sometimes. I believe an untidy house

now and then would be allowable if it would save the breaking of the housewife's nervous system."

CROCUS: "There is need that all shall realize the necessity for times of refreshing and recreation. Life was made to be enjoyable: it is enjoyable. It only remains for you to use your native ingenuity in discovering how it may be so to you. But your native ingenuity is helpless in the swirl of the twentieth-century maelstrom if you look down upon the surging circumstances which seem eager to engulf you. You would better look up to the stars, which shine with an abiding luster. The story of the Crocus is a tale of looking upward, and there is a world of recreation and rest in this look aloft. The silver cord ought never to be strained asunder, or the golden bowl be crushed, or the pitcher be shattered at the fountain, or the wheel be broken at the cistern. but each should minister in its place until worn down to the final end, not broken in the prime. If a man could develop symmetrically, every function being exercised equally, he would not have to drag through the last ten or twenty-five years of his life with a stubborn liver, a feeble brain, or a rebellious heart. He would be a well-rounded man up to the end. And then, like the deacon's one-horse shav, he would cease at once to work and to live. This is an ideal condition that may seem beyond you, but if you men would use your boasted reason as sanely as we flowers do our instinct, and a rational recreation should be made a real part of life's schedule, you would more nearly approximate to the ideal and then 'at evening time there would be light.' When the western sun begins to edge toward the horizon and the shadows creep along the hills it will not then be your chief concern as to whether your bank account is larger than your neighbor's, but whether your spinal cord is still supple. You, son of man, if you are wise you will not copy the methods of the Mexican peon who lives in a careless, happy-go-lucky world, nor will you fall into the folly of the American mania and make life a mere round of money getting. You will, rather, take the medium path, which

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

passes, indeed, over rough and rocky eminences, yet now and again skirts the meadow and winds among flower-beds and shade-trees filled with singing birds."



The citron-tree or spicy grove for me would never yield A perfume half so grateful as the lilies of the field.

Eliza Cook: "Journal."



XI

A CHAT BY THE WAYSIDE

*ROCUS: "Why is it, son of man, that mankind so eagerly seeks for flowers among the ruins and for the rainbow in the storm-cloud?"

MAN: "I cannot tell, unless it is that joy is our birthright, and having sold it for a mess of pottage we are trying to find its counterpart."

CROCUS: "You have answered well. Joy is your birthright. But an inheritance to be of use must be taken account of; time must be spent upon it. It seems as though some one had sent fire into your bones, you are so restless and fly from one thing to another. Time is the main factor of life. As your feet press the earth, so your life must rest firmly down on time. But make the most of the ground under your feet. While you must not live for

pleasure, you will not live at all unless you live with pleasure. Then make more account of time, and do not hurry so to find the door into eternity."

MAN: "Lord, we are rivers, hastening to thy sea."

CROCUS: "Yes, you are hastening, but God does not drive too fast for the scenery to be enjoyed. Though the river is hastening to the sea with an uncompromising hand upon it, sometimes it eddies in a shady cove and allows the sunshine to dance through the leaves upon its waves, or kisses the white stretch of sandy beach and the bare feet of the laughing boys and girls wading in its waters."

MAN: "And should we spend more time upon the way?"

CROCUS: "It is your privileged duty. There are all about you nicely done up packages hidden away in nooks and corners with such messages as these upon them: 'For one who would enjoy'; 'For the pleasure of him who knows how to be pleased'; 'To be used by one with a faculty for gladness.' Do you seek them out?

You will pass this way but once, so enjoy every tree by the roadside, every door you enter, every person you meet along the way. Stop and chat with Life as she passes you in song of bird, the laugh of the baby, the flowing of the river, or the smile of your wife. Stop and chat with Life, and be not in such haste to see her pass; her footsteps will fall on God's footstool for you but this time. And if you seem preoccupied, she is a sensitive maiden and will not obtrude upon you. She will not tarry long. She will not be spurned by dissolute people who are in a hurry to reach the limits of her domain."

MAN: "Oh, my sin, my sin! The Crocus is shriving my soul!"

CROCUS: "Son of man, there will be barns bursting with plenty long after you are gone, but that does not interest you now. Your chief concern is to accept from each passing agent the present which Life has sent you. And she herself will sometimes visit you in person. Then do not fail to entertain strangers, for in so doing some have entertained angels unawares.

Stop and chat with Life even though she may be garbed in servant's clothing, for she is a wonderful housekeeper and her dinners are exquisite. Eat them slowly that you may relish them. If you do not, there is no forgiveness with her, and long years after she will, like a Nemesis, call the incident to your mind with fierce heartburnings. Here she comes with brush and pencil, for she is a painter as well, and one of wide renown. Look, O man with a soul, upon the glories of that sunset, that landscape yonder, that mountain with its snow-capped summit towering as to the stars, that silver brook winding among the silver-leaved shrubs and out into the sparkling meadow!"

MAN: "Beautiful, beautiful!"

CROCUS: "And how prodigal she is with her gifts. Did you ever examine the dimples in your baby's cheeks, and the depths in his eyes as fathomless as Hayden Lake? Have you ever realized the beauty of that girl of yours, with her rosy cheeks and laughing eyes; and the boy so like you, and yet another individual as distinct as though begotten from another

race? And that wife whose girlish grace and beauty won you, and whose womanly power has held you and kept your soul from the pollution that, like the 'pestilence, walketh in darkness.'-have you taken time to enjoy her as of vore? You would better appreciate this priceless gift, for Life is jealous and will not brook a divided affection. Your business is not to make excursions into other fields, but to enjoy the land which you possess and while you have possession of it. And when Life has brought to you the laughing-eved 'kinder' to blend two hearts most surely into one, is it not worth while to take time to examine the living cables that enslave you? But, soul of man, have you not been, oftentimes, so busy about doing things, hurrying hither and von on errands that afterwards seemed all but unnecessary, that you almost forgot that there were any babies in the house? But let me warn you that Life loves the little ones, and she is jealous, as I have said; so if you would hold them for this world you must pay them some attention. Even the flowers will die unless the gardener does his duty. Are not your babies of more value than many flowers?"

MAN: "True, most true. Columbus discovered America, but I, through the Crocus pilot, am discovering the world."

CROCUS: "There are few that do, though they live long lives upon its patient bosom. And yet they do not really live as much as I. It is foreordained that flowers must vegetate. but men are expected to live an abundant life. and that is a divine thing. But no life can be but a counterfeit of the really divine existence. your inheritance, that does not take joy into account. It would be as rational to think that hunger has no means of satisfaction as to believe that the faculty of joy can find nothing to delight in or time in which to satisfy its longing. Moreover, in feeding this faculty you shall become rich and strong just as surely as meat and drink give strength to the arm and power to the brain."

MAN: "'And he that believeth shall not make haste.'"



Immortal amaranth, a flower which once In Paradise, fast by the Tree of Life, Began to bloom, but soon for Man's offense To heaven removed, where first it grew, there grows, And flowers aloft shading the fount of life.

Milton: "Paradise Lost."



XII

COMING BACK TO EDEN

MAN: "Crocus, do the flowers ever weep?"

CROCUS: "No; the mission of the flowers is to scatter joy broadcast. Smiles and song

are their natural manifestations. And yet there was a time when my people wept. It was in Gethsemane when Jesus sweat great drops of blood, and on Calvary when the cross wept and dripped with crimson stains upon their petals, and the soul of the flower was crushed by the agony of its Maker. That was an awful season, whose import mankind does not yet fully realize. But those bloody days that wrung the heart of God made possible eternal sunshine. For you must know that none can fathom the depths of joy who has not sounded the deeps of sorrow. But since that first Easter morning,

with none other but angels near, when the eyes of the Crocus beheld the Saviour of the world come forth from the conquered tomb, the flowers have known no language but gladness. But why do you ask?"

MAN: "Because I have just returned from a meeting, and such a weeping time was there."

CROCUS: "Was it in sorrow for sins unforgiven? It is proper to weep for these?"

MAN: "No; it was just a weeping time without any special reason for it. Some people gave testimonies and cried over them. It seems to me that I shall never get over wanting to sing for very joy that my sins have been forgiven."

CROCUS: "And that is natural and right. It seems strange that religion should ever have been clouded with melancholy, but the fact remains. Many a child has been driven from a life of sweet and fruitful devotion because of some gloomy-faced teacher who had cirrhosis of the liver and thought it was religion! What that youth needed was a friend with a healthy digestion who, in a healthy voice could say: 'Look up, boy. Do not let that poor man's

jaundiced ideas poison your fresh young life. Come with me and I will show you where there is a robin nesting, and you shall see her babies if you will promise not to hurt them.' And when that man got his boy friend out into the woods he showed him not only the robin's nest but a glimpse into the face of God. That man not only had a religion that no physical infirmity could get in the way of, but he knew boys. But joy in religion must obtain notwithstanding all its misrepresentatives."

MAN: "But is the joy of religion a different manifestation from the joy, say, of looking into the face of one you love?"

CROCUS: "Not at all. There are not a dozen kinds of joy any more than there are many varieties of faith. Faith is faith and joy is joy wherever you find them. The object of faith and the source of joy may be different, but that is no matter. Joy in religion is but the same faculty which holds sway elsewhere, exercising itself in the spiritual realm. The person is one. He may manifest himself in many different ways, but he in his normal life is one.

Sin creates the divided soul, the war in the heart: pits itself against self until, if rescue is not made, the fall of that life is sure. Jesus spoke of how one going into a strong man's house would first bind the strong man and then he will spoil his house. But meanwhile the captive will cry out and be in agony. There will be no peace or prosperity there. Only as the 'strong Son of God' comes and drives out the ravisher of that home is there hope or gladness. Unity of life brings joy. Paul cried out in despair that the traitor had divided his soul. but when he saw the face of Christ he shouted that freedom had come from his Lord. He rejoiced in a whole life now. Before it had been fragmentary."

MAN: "Then the natural, the spontaneous thing is, if a man has been freed from the horrid bondage of sin, to be happy. That, I take it, is self-evident. But is that all there is to religion? Have we not something more than an empty soul to rejoice over?"

CROCUS: "By all means. When a man is freed from sin he is then on the threshold of

true religion. Religion is the state of being bound to God, not by the force of a master but by the eager offering by a servant of himself. As gravitation touches every molecule of matter in God's seemingly limitless universe, so must His influence bind the whole of your nature to Him. The whole of your nature, notice, and not a fraction of it. The danger of life everywhere is the tendency to deal in fractions, to cultivate parts, to forget to keep the balance by developing the nature symmetrically. You have a bow and arrow and you make tense the string and hold it there with the arrow in place, but you never shoot the arrow. After a while the bow will lose its power because of the unremitting tension, since it has not shot its shaft. A man eats but never works to use up the power the food has given to the muscles, and these become flaccid and powerless. A man may pray without ceasing, but if he does no spiritual work he gets no benefit from his devotions. In fact, if you pray much and work not at all you will be in the condition of the man who eats and never exercises, or the bow that is tense to shoot the arrow which is never discharged. Here is a place for earnest thought. But here also is the answer to your question of why so many Christians weep instead of rejoicing. They have spiritual dyspepsia from over-feeding and under-work."

MAN: "Ah, I see; I see clearly. But I must not interrupt you in your story. Go on."

CROCUS: "By the wonderful chemistry of life the organs of digestion are able to take the most exceptional things of little food value, as pickles and rich sauces, and change them into brain, blood, muscles, and bones and keep a perfectly healthy body if the joyful life is lived. But the whole of existence is a wide table of different foodstuffs for the soul. And though there are a myriad varieties vet there is a sort of spiritual chemistry in the Christ-born soul which is able to compare, sort, select, and finally transform into blessings those things which otherwise would be deadly poisons. There are circumstances, prophesying nothing but misfortune, which, if they are met with calm trust, but usher in a better day. Joseph the slave is but the pre-

lude to Joseph the exalted ruler. Bedford Jail is only the foreword of Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress.' But this spiritual function must not be worried. To trust the soul in the midst of God's wide world is the highest wisdom, even though the forest shuts in dark and forbidding about you. No matter if the night draws on and there is no habitation near, to allow terror to bring confusion only makes the situation more fraught with danger. In such a case you will stop and calmly ask the way of Him whom no darkness can hide, when immediately you will hear a word beside you saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' When the soul is in such a state of peaceful trust you have a most perfect example of the true religion. And it ought not to be a very difficult task to enjoy that."

MAN: "Speaking of enjoying one's religion calls to my mind some conversations I overheard between several of our mutual friends, which I must relate to you. John Paul, who may be a little eccentric but who is pure gold nevertheless, accosted his friend Peter Mark, the other day, with 'Friend Mark, are you en-

joving your religion?' The other responded without hesitation, 'Well, no, I'm not, and for a very good reason. I have but little to enjoy.' 'No,' answered Paul, 'that is not the difficulty. You have religion enough, such as it is, for I must confess it is rather a poor brand, but you do not use it fairly. You go at it the same way vou do vour meals. You bolt Dr. Shepherd's fine sermons en bloc and never give them a moment's consideration afterwards. You take too much thought for your financial stature but literally none at all as to how your soul may be made fat. You keep your purse with all diligence, but your heart, out of which are the issues of life, receives very little attention. Peter Mark, you are a spiritual dyspeptic. Take a little more time for your religion and you will enjoy both it and your friends better. And I might add that God and your neighbors will. incidentally, take a much greater pleasure in vou.' "

CROCUS: "That is stating the case as squarely as your flower friend has been presenting it to you."

MAN: "Without stopping to see how his friend took what he had said. John Paul turned and walked down the block and button-holed Matthew Jones just as he was crossing the street to enter the courthouse. With the same lack of ceremony which he had used a moment before he began, 'Lawyer Jones, are you enjoying vour religion?' Mr. Jones was somewhat taken aback by this abrupt address, although he was fairly well acquainted with his friend's peculiarities, and coming to a full stop with one foot on the curbing, said, 'Why, when I am engaged in religious activities, as the church services. I enjoy them, of course. Certainly, Mr. Paul, I enjoy my religion.' 'No, you do not,' contradicted Mr. Paul. 'You do not enjoy your religion, because you keep it in cold storage. Canned goods may be passable when nothing else is to be had, but the seasonable product is preferable. But religion needs not to be preserved for time of famine. Like the mercies of the Lord, it is new every morning and fresh every evening. You will remember that the Israelites who gathered more than sufficient

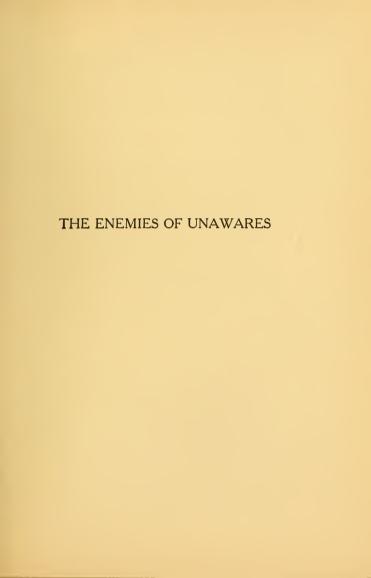
manna for the day, intending to store the overplus for future use, found their larders filled with unpleasant odors on the next day, and they had nothing to eat at noon if they did not gather it each morning. And vet vou store vour spiritual food on Sunday, what little is left at the close of the day, and, as you use none during the week, think it will keep until the next Sabbath. Mr. Jones, you are a heretic of the first water, and your heresy is in thinking that religion has to do with a certain section of your nature, a part of your time, a portion of your service. You have been deceived by certain philosophers who have divided life into halves, calling one secular and the other sacred. You protest that you cannot mix religion and business. Mr. Jones. I do not believe it. Mv friend Goodlad, over at the corner, mixes religion in his business and I never find sand in his sugar or cabbage leaves in his tea. More than that. I find that he always has time, no matter how rushing the trade, to be a friend in need to the man who is down."

CROCUS: "I trust that the curbstone sermons of John Paul will bear abundant fruit. But there is need that somebody shall speak frankly. There is little chance for pleasure to be taken in negative righteousness, or obedience to the bare moral law. And this is all there is to much of the so-called religion of this day. You would hardly enjoy your garden if you did nothing but watch for weeds. I have heard of two definitions of a garden. One person defined it as a place fenced in: the other spoke of it as a plot of ground filled with beautiful flowers and trees, traversed by delightful walks, and dotted here and there with comfortable seats where the weary might rest and drink in the beauty. There are many who think of religion as something that shuts them in from the world, fences them off from the roaring lions that inhabit the wicked wilderness. But there are those who forget all about any inclosing walls or fences and go about eating the fruit, enjoying the fragrance of the flowers, and being delightfully happy in the companionship of

each other and God's beautiful gifts. With such God dwells in person, and any place is glorious then."

MAN: "'In His presence there is fulness of joy."

CROCUS: "But my choicest friend is the old philosopher who never wearied of talking about his beautiful garden. One day the other wise men of his set said to him. 'Come now and show us this wonderful garden of yours, for it must be unequaled in loveliness if all you say of it is true.' Expressing great delight, the old man directed them to follow him as he led the way into a narrow inclosure, in the rear of a low-roofed dwelling, where were blooming a few rose bushes, some violets and pansies, and one or two shade-trees. The visitors looked about in wonder and in a chorus exclaimed. 'Why, this is not a very remarkable garden; it is too small and narrow.' 'Yes,' said the old philosopher, as a glory illumined his face, 'but it's wondrous high.' "



Look at this delicate plant that lifts its head from the meadow,

See how its leaves all point to the north, as true as the magnet;

It is the compass-flower, that the finger of God has suspended

Here on its fragile stalk to direct the traveler's journey

Over the sea-like, pathless, limitless waste of the desert. Such in the soul of man is faith.

Longfellow: "Evangeline."



XIII

THE ENEMIES OF UNAWARES



ROCUS: "Among the many kinds of savage creatures that prey upon mankind, creeping up on their victims unawares and throttling them before

they have time to gather themselves up for resistance, there are three especially against which I wish to put you on your guard. Some governments place a bounty on the heads of less savage beasts. A concerted plan to exterminate these fierce pests ought to be made."

MAN: "You speak, I doubt not, of the ravages of packs of wolves, driven by hunger from the wilds of Siberia and the jungles of Asia, to prey upon the simple, rural population living on the outskirts of civilization."

CROCUS: "No; I refer to the cunning and 139]

cruel enemies that creep in upon your consciousness from the wilderness of your own nature. I have spoken of the divided soul, of the civil war within the heart. I now speak of a sort of guerilla warfare which is being carried on constantly in the innermost lives of the men of this generation, where individual enemies, like mountain bandits, slip up and loot the treasure-house and then escape safely back to their strongholds."

MAN: "You arouse my curiosity. Name one of these brutal enemies."

CROCUS: "One of the first of the clan is Fear. Fear kills. Men face the battle of life with a gnawing Fear in their hearts which eats away their vitals faster than sword-thrusts of warriors could drink up their blood. 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.' And if his thoughts are clouded with a Fear that he will be vanquished at every turn in the road, it would be a wonder if this did not come true. God had conquered the Midianites for Gideon before ever the pitchers were turned by the potter, much less broken by the three hundred

heroes, by putting a deadly Fear for the advancing Israelitish host in their hearts."

MAN: "Now that you speak thus I remember what Job said: 'The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me.' But how can Fear bring disaster to us?"

CROCUS: "Fear creates an expectation and there is a subtle law connecting the one looking with the thing for which he looks. No man has yet discovered how this law works; he only knows it is there. Then Fear weakens the soul so that any other enemy may drag it down. There ought always to be a sleepless guard in the watchtower to detect and drive away this woeful creature."

MAN: "But yet another enemy; declare his name and nature."

CROCUS: "His name is Worry. This is a wolf-like demon which slips in behind the fortifications, stealing by the sentries under cover of the darkness, lurking in some dark corner for days, only to leap out unexpectedly from his hiding-place in a vicious attempt to set his teeth in your throat. You club him off, and

he shows his teeth in your very face. Finally, as the sun bursts out in its splendor from behind the clouds, he slinks away, snarling, to a den he has made under your doorstep—for, like Giant Despair, Worry cannot thrive in sunshiny weather. If he has wounded you, take care, for the poison of his fangs produces a shriveling effect drawing one over so that the lungs do not have free play to fill with good fresh air. But Worry is not able to make a successful attack upon you when the head is thrown back and the lungs filled with God's glorious, sun-pregnant air, since the gleam in your eye cowers him."

MAN: "This is truly a vicious brute. But is there yet another?"

CROCUS: "There are many others, but the last of the three I promised to mention is Doubt."

Man:

"'Our doubts are traitors,
And makes us lose the good we oft might win,
By fearing to attempt.'"

CROCUS: "Yes, Doubt is a traitor. He sometimes masquerades as an angel—a part he plays well, since he was created good but fell from his high estate. He now is nothing more than one of the heathen gods."

Man:

"'But the gods are dead—
Ay, Zeus is dead, and all the gods but Doubt,
And Doubt is brother devil to Despair!'"

CROCUS: "Jesus condemns Doubt always as He renounced despair. He said to Peter, as he lifted him up from sinking when he attempted to walk to Him on the water, 'Wherefore didst thou doubt?' implying that his doubts, like leaden weights, dragged him down. 'If ye have faith, and doubt not, the mountains shall be removed at your word.' 'Seek not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of a doubtful mind.' Doubt has no place in Christ's gospel. His disciples follow His lead. Peter was commanded to go with the three men who sought him while he was musing on the housetop, 'nothing doubting,' and he repeats this last phrase in his report

of the incident as though it were the key to the situation. Paul, in his instructions to Timothy, says, 'I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.' He puts it still stronger when he arbitrates in the controversy about eating meats, and says, 'Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned.'"

MAN: "But a man thinks not who doubts not. Doubts, like birds, or devils, or heathen gods, as you say, fly in the moment the doors or windows are opened to allow a look without. What shall I say? Am I wicked because they are under my roof?"

CROCUS: "Not unless you make them welcome there. But if you feed and nourish your visitors, then are you guilty of heathen worship. Doubt is but an opportunity for faith. Have I not said that when the thrust of nature, or circumstance, man or devil, is downward, you are to resist it? Doubt is embraced when you gaze downward, and it is then that you grow dizzy.

But the motto of the Crocus is, 'Look up.' This attitude of the soul is death to Doubt."

MAN: "I see, I see.

'Faith means perpetual unbelief Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.'"

CROCUS: "The main thing is the leadership. If the snake be underfoot and the angel leads the way, there is little danger. The fateful question is, 'Which shall captain your journey of life, Faith or Doubt?' Mr. Gigadibs, in bitter pique because he could not fit up his 'average cabin of a life' to his exact liking, gives Doubt the keys, who strips his small sea-dwelling bare. The bishop, on the other hand, knowing that he will have to use hard self-control in 'crossing the ocean of this world,' denying himself many delightful comforts, has the wisdom to turn over the task of furnishing his cabin to Faith's deft fingers, with the result that his surroundings are both shipshape and sightly. It is best to start right, for fear no ship will

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

overhaul you from which you will be able to get additional furnishings."

MAN: "Go on. I like your meaning. Lead me on yet farther."

CROCUS: "Much, therefore, depends on the beginnings in this world. If a youth pay court to a maiden his advances are linked with faith in her and not doubt about her. Doubt destroys the beginnings, so there is nothing to build upon. Faith gives a foundation and insures a future. When one is thrust out to meet the real problems that confront the average mortal he will doubtless need to give up some of his ideals, but he must not surrender his complete capital stock and start with bankruptcy, and Doubt asks that. He needs to clear away the underbrush in the back pasture, but it is not necessary to start a forest fire to make it more complete. He may have to burn the bridges behind him, but that does not imply mining the highway that stretches on before. He certainly needs windows in his dwelling, but to cut port-holes in the roof, at least in our climate, would not be considered wise. If you

will start out with faith in the future, in God, and in yourself, you will surely discover hardships, but success will come along too. But to set on with Doubt filling your sky will bring defeat before the task is well begun."

MAN: "But you speak more about this last evil creature than the first two enemies. Why is this? Are they not all equally deadly?"

CROCUS: "Yes; but you wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against wicked spirits in the heavenly places, and Doubt is such a one as gives incarnate form to the other two. But Fear is the most deadly if we may judge from the outward manifestation. Jesus made much of Faith as a defensive agent: You will remember that while Jairus was praying Him to come and heal his daughter the servant broke in upon them and announced that help would be too late, since the child was already dead. But Jesus turned quickly to the heartbroken man, as the sad message fell on his ear, and simply said, 'Be not afraid, only believe.' 'Be not afraid, only believe!' How beautiful is

the voice that speaks to you thus, for the words have passed over Jairus' shoulder and reach out for you. Very often the Master used to speak this way to His disciples. 'It is I, be not afraid.' 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' 'Fear not them which kill the body.'"

MAN: "'Fear not,' O blessed command! What strength is unlocked here. It is like food to the famished, as water to the dying of thirst, as the touch of the mother's hand to the child lost in the forest. 'Fear not, only believe.' Lord, I will not fear while thou art nigh."

CROCUS: "Yes, His words are 'Fear not, only believe.' He does not say anything about the need of doubt, or how truth may be found by doubting its existence. He does not speak to His disciples, saying, 'Doubt on, beloved, and when doubt hath conceived, it bringeth forth faith.' Oh, no, not that! He says, rather, 'Fear not, only believe.' Through the gateway of Faith must your soul enter to reach gianthood. See Pilgrim as he looks out from the Interpreter's House upon the warrior who

attacks the guards at the castle gate while the doubters stand about with cowardly fear stamped upon their faces. Does he admire these exiles of Doubt? Or are his eyes turned with delight upon the hero who knows nothing but the joy of faith as he cuts his way through all opposition only to be welcomed by the victors on the ramparts, singing,

'Come in, come in, Eternal glory thou shalt win'?''

MAN: "'Doubt is a traitor,' says Shakespeare; yes, a traitor, and I despise him. But Faith is a hero and I love him."

CROCUS: "You sometimes hear it said that there is no chance for the hero in your modern life. It is not true. In every age, among men of every race and trade, this god of fortune walks. There is hardly a day passes but heroic Opportunity gently taps some bright-faced youth upon the shoulder and says: 'This is your hour, the hour when the immortal doors swing wide for you to enter. If the blood of a man courses through your veins, pass through.

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

No weakling enters here.' And then he clasps his sword, unsheathes the blade, and boldly crosses the threshold."

MAN:

"Some men live near to God, as my right arm
Is near to me; and then they walk about
Mailed in full proof of faith, and bear a charm
That mocks at fear, and bars the door on doubt,
And dares the impossible."

May I dare to join their company."



And the hyacinth, purple, and white, and blue, Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew Of music so delicate, soft, and intense, It was felt like an odor within the sense.

Shelley: "The Sensitive Plant."



XIV

THE CROCUS'S DREAM

AN: "Crocus, you are not privileged to travel and so I want to tell you of a wonderful country I visited some time ago. It is Old Mexico.

Down there is to be found a really primitive civilization, the customs of ages long past jost-ling the most modern inventions of this wonderful century. Every hour in the day for seven days in the week you may see the peon with his wife and children bearing heavy burdens on back and head and walking long miles with their killing loads, although finely equiped freight, express, and passenger trains glide past them on the one side and elegant touring cars whiz by on the other. How easy it would be for these modern annihilators of distance and labor to do their drudgery for them. I call these people

primitive because they have not learned to use their heads to save their heels."

CROCUS: "But you and your people are primitive too, for why do you not use your heads to save your hearts? Why do you not put more intellect and will into your religion, and so bring out more blessings for yourselves?"

MAN: "I do not understand you, Crocus. You remember that you have had to speak very plainly to me, for I am but a child in knowledge."

CROCUS: "Well, I have had a dream. Think of a flower dreaming! But it is such a good dream that I must tell you about it, since all the actors in it were mortals."

MAN: "A flower dream! Wonderful! But tell it to me."

CROCUS: "I dreamed that the God of heaven came down to earth and, pitying His human children because of their toilsome life, He built them a great world railroad on which they might always ride and ship all their merchandise. I thought, 'How good my Maker is.' But while this was wonderful to me, the more

wonderful part of it is vet to come. After the railroad was all built and trains running everywhere, stopping at all stations where there were dwellings, I saw that these mortals still continued to walk and carry their heavy burdens. A train would pull into the depot and wait for the passengers to get on board; there would be crowds about to see the strange, new creation, but the train would at last start up empty and the crowd would scatter, each carrying his crushing burden. There were among the number many women and not a few children, all on foot and burdened with all sorts of goods, cumbersome and heavy. And I cried out in a voice so loud, as it seemed to me, it ought to have arrested the attention of these weary mortals, though none turned toward me: 'O primitive mortals, why do you go trudging wearily along life's dusty highway, regardless of the grand central, trans-world railway system, built, owned, and operated by Jehovah of Hosts for the convenience of all His people, tickets at any office? Are you not primitive to walk when you might ride, to carry heavy burdens upon

breaking backs when God's trains are speeding past you all the time, and you have free passes for yourselves as well as for your baggage?"

MAN: "Wonderful dream! But can you describe the train more in detail?"

CROCUS: "I will if you will not interrupt me. Here is a splendidly equipped freight train, with patent process of preserving perishable goods in every car: 'Casting all your care upon Him: for He careth for you.' And here is the specially chartered express train to carry all your extra luggage: 'Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you may ask or think.' There are two sections to this train because of the large amount of excess baggage, and the running orders of the second section are: 'The government shall be upon His shoulders.' There is a fast-mail train running over the whole line which also carries the parcel post, letters and packages received at all stops: 'And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went into the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord.' This road's

construction train is remarkable both for its equipment and also for its splendid crew: 'Being careful in every good work, strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness.'"

MAN: "But what about the passenger train?"

CROCUS: "I asked you not to interrupt me. Of all the interesting features of this remarkable railroad system, the passenger train is the most wonderful. First the engine: 'The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of an emerald; and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel: and they turned not when they went. Whithersoever the spirit was to go they went: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.' The day coaches are spotlessly clean and the large easy-chairs are arranged for either tête-a-tête or large friendly groups: 'He who is rich in mercy, hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places.' Then there is the observation car: 'They looked on Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.' A coach is also provided for invalids and those recovering from overwork and worry: 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.'"

MAN: "How I should like to travel on this train!"

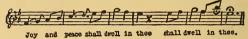
CROCUS: "One coach is especially devoted to the Jubilee Singers, who represent not one race only, but have been chosen from all quarters of the globe, and who have but one object, and that to produce the best possible music for the glory of the owner of the road and the delight of the guests on the train: 'And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.' This is their commission: 'Praise the Lord with the harp: sing unto Him with the psaltery and an

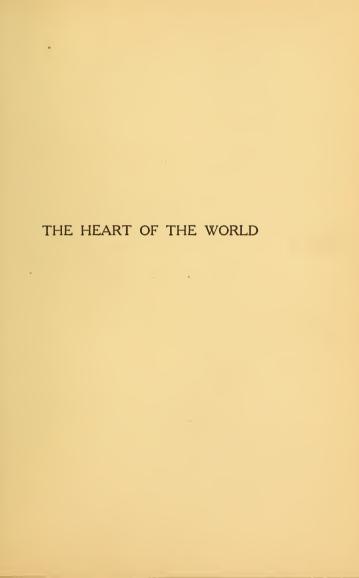
instrument of ten strings, with trumpets and sound of cornet. Sing unto Him a new song. There is always a diner in connection with this well appointed train: 'Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever ve do, do all to the glory of God.' Of the drinks on the menu card there is not one that steals away the reason or benumbs the senses, but they are of the delicious vintage from the highland vineyards of which Amos, the herdman of Tekoa, speaks: 'The mountains shall drop with new wine.' Finally, the Pullman is commodious and pleasant and, while not all the berths are lowers, they are comfortable and sanitary: 'Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds,' for 'I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety.' 'There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God."

MAN (reverently): "With what a sense of restful pleasure do I recall the time when I traveled over this road. It seemed as though angels hovered near as I dropped asleep with

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

the music of the Jubilee Singers ringing in my ears, and the last words that reached me before I drifted sweetly into refreshing slumber were:





"Look to the lilies, how they grow!"
"Twas thus the Saviour said, that we
Even in the simplest flowers that blow
God's ever watchful care might see.

Moir: "Lilies."



XV

THE HEART OF THE WORLD

AN: "Crocus, if you should be taken up and transplanted to a waste, howling wilderness, would you be unhappy?"

CROCUS: "Not at all. To be sure, I should miss your pleasant companion-

ship and the friendly faces of the passers-by, but I should soon make friends with the trees and birds of my new home, and even the wild beasts would, after a while, come to know and speak kindly to me. Then the same sun whom I adore would smile on me there as here; the moon, too, would light my face at night, and the many stars I know would still talk with me."

MAN: "Then your happiness does not depend on the place so much as the presence of those you love?"

163]

CROCUS: "Precisely. And this is coming to be the case among men as the feline instinct is lost in the process of their being 'changed into His image from glory to glory.' To the great souls personality is everything; locality nothing. The soul of Robert Burns was exultant in the wildest waste when he could sing to his beloved:

'The desert were a paradise If thou wert there.'

Saint Paul had so imbibed the spirit of his beloved Master, whose slave he delighted to call himself, that any place was paradise, since he reckoned his Lord as always with him. In the Roman dungeon he praised God for the opportunity to glorify his Master by spreading the story of salvation among the prisoners, and even the courtiers of the royal palace as he had occasion, sending out to his anxious friends the cheering message, 'I am full, and abound and have need of nothing.' At the same hour the Emperor Nero, monarch of the world, was so tired with his own useless life that, after nearly a score of years of ruling to satisfy his every

whim and pleasure, he hired a slave to take his wretched life, which he was too cowardly to put an end to himself. No wonder Milton makes Satan say, in his great epic on the fall of man, 'I myself am hell.'"

Man:

"'Not in the clamor of the crowded street, Nor in the shouts and plaudits of the throng; But in ourselves are victory and defeat.'

'Not to be taken out of the world, but to be kept from the evil that is in the world,' which means that we are not to let evil fill our souls any more than the swimmer allows the sea to glut his lungs. But how shall we keep the world out of our lives, and yet remain in its very midst?"

CROCUS: "As I do. I look up to the sun and by means of that look I find strength to throw off all foreign substances from my person. Your religion, you say, finds its chief meaning in the fact that you are bound to God; mine, in being tied to yonder sun. It is my delight to glance along the sun's rays and see the magnificence of that great orb of the sky. So you

should not be satisfied with feeling the pull of the cables of divine love. You should not only feel but see. Do you then sight along the line of these golden strands to see if, perchance, you may not behold the great white throne, the angel choir and the seraphim."

MAN: "But if I have caught your spirit, the Crocus lives not for himself, but all this glory that comes to him from the sun and sky is that he may give it out to the world again. Am I not right?"

CROCUS: "Quite right. And all the infilling that you have received from your Lord is simply that you, also, may flow out to human need with abundant gladness. In all creation, from God upon His throne unto the tiniest flower that grows, the blessing of life is to give that life away. This is the key that unlocks the universal treasure-house. It is the fountain that is always flowing that lives. The stagnant pool, misering its treasured water, rots and dies."

MAN: "As a striking illustration of your word for to-day I have lately heard of a woman who was so despondent that she told her pastor

her life was utterly miserable and she felt as though the world were a prison-house. He was a wise man and promised to cure her of her melancholy if she would take his medicine. This she agreed to do, though she was skeptical about his being able to fulfil his promise. Said he: 'This is my prescription. Go, this afternoon, to Grandma Blank's and read a halfhour to her out of her favorite book. Do this three days in succession, and then report to me.' The woman demurred at first, but, having promised, she kept her word and went that very afternoon on her mission. When she returned home she was singing. She went the next day and that night, not being able to hold back the good news longer, she telephoned to her pastor and said: 'I have seen my vision and been released from my dungeon. Life is a new and wonderful thing to me now."

CROCUS: "That woman had been consigned to solitary confinement in her own soul by her own will. All she needed was to will to go out and mingle with others and find freedom in service. In your religion you must have love

for God, but you must have flesh and blood to bestow it upon. If you do not manifest your regard for your fellows you shall surely die. since to miser the soul's chief treasure is as culpable as to hoard gold, the free exchange of which makes civilized life possible. The figtree shall wither to the roots unless the luscious fruit is discovered among the leaves. To assuage human misery is one of the divinest opportunities for the heart of man to thrill with the highest joy. But no man need expect to be glad if his neighbor is enduring a misfortune that he can lighten. If you think of salvation for your own soul as a mere fire-escape, or wreckage raft, you will grow more and more scrawny until you are dead as to God, having but a name to live. 'The joy of the Lord is your strength,' but if that strength is not used to make others glad, you will have neither joy nor strength long. The heart of man and the heart of God are two great double-locked treasure-vaults, and loving service is the key that will drive back the bolted doors to each. If you shall find entrance here, you will have unlocked the heart of the world."



The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose (the autumn crocus, the "rose of Sharon" of Solomon's Song).—Isaiah.



XVI

THE WILL TO BE GLAD

CROCUS: "In this busy life of yours, busy with the every-day incidents and happenings, like a child seeking for playthings, you are so engrossed

with the chips that you cut from the rough block you are working upon that you forget to look for the features of the divine likeness you have been assigned to chisel out of existence. Scraping together the fragments for a living so occupies your attention that you have lost sight of the main purpose, building a life from the crude material put in your hands. And so in the anxiety lest you should lose a poor, broken piece of waste material, you fail to feel the thrill and swelling of the soul at the sight of a hint of the new creation, the beginnings of a noble manhood that is appearing under your hand. The

joy task has been lost sight of in the mere effort to support animal life."

MAN: "But is the successful attainment of joy a task?"

CROCUS: "It is a law of life that all things worth having come only by means of effort, and joy is no exception to the rule. It may be easier to be downcast than to be glad, but if so the same reason for it applies here as in the physical world. Gravitation is indispensable to all the heavenly bodies to keep them from flying from their orbits and wrecking everything. says that he was given a thorn in the flesh, 'lest he should be exalted above measure.' Nature's downward thrust is demanded that in life's upward struggle it shall not only keep, but add to, its vital power and character. Thus joy is a thousand-fold more glad because it has conquered the impulse toward despair. The will has business here. And if you shall fail to find happiness in God's wide fields it is because you have allowed things, mere happenings and incidents, the fragmentary commonplaces of time,

to clutter up and fill the throne-room which the will alone ought to occupy."

MAN: "O Lord,

'Our wills are ours, we know not how: Our wills are ours, to make them thine.'

But if they are Thine is it Thy will that they should be employed in following the multitude to sin's sad end, or blazing the way through the everglades to the realm of gladness? Doubtless Isaiah's word, 'the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose,' is an earnest of the answer."

CROCUS: "Except that it was the Crocus and not the rose that made that desert glorious. You have been wandering in the desert? Then use your will, as does the one you call the hero of the flowers, and the desert shall be a garden. What is your will for if it is not to be used to bring to you one of the most necessary things in all the world? Shall your will be employed in the choice of a stone to throw at the first robin that heralds the spring and not be used to pluck a sunbeam and set it in your soul? Is

your will worth while to whip you to your business at seven in the morning, after a late social function the night before, and not of sufficient excellence to impel you to see the color, the humor, the beauty, and gladness of life, instead of just the dead, black drudgery of it? Ought not one to exercise his volition in the manipulation of business opportunities, the increase of his bank account, and not utilize it to strengthen life's vital flow? 'Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.' The soul is the measure of your success or failure, be it fat or lean—the soul, and not physical attainments or material possessions."

MAN: "Charles Reade, the novelist, tells of a man who became violently ill of jaundice because of a fit of temper. You would say that the will be used in forbidding certain emotions to enter the soul?"

CROCUS: "This is its prerogative. Anger poisons the fountains of the whole system as does jealousy, envy, hatred, and all the evil passions. Sad thoughts, too, are unhealthy,

but good and great thoughts are joy bringers. Some people cannot think great thoughts, and so they have to depend solely on humorous ones. Others, who are accustomed to deal in mental long tons, ought not to strain their minds by always lifting at these great conceptions, but occasionally they should come down to the light lumber of humor."

MAN: "I wonder if the reason that the Irishman is such a universal benefactor is because he is such an amazing humorist?"

CROCUS: "Doubtless. Humor is like salt,—a saving element in the midst of the disorganizing forces that are at work trying to wreck and ruin the whole structure of society. The dangerous man is he who sees only the wrong and injustice on the one side, or the complete solution and key to the whole complex problem on the other. The one cures everything in the existing order and would immediately wipe it out by force and the torch of revolution. The other is so bent on the theory of the true answer and final issue as to overlook entirely the real facts in the case. Each for-

gets to extract the individual element from the individual event in which there is always something enjoyable and possibly even droll. It is the great-heart who can not only see both the injustice and the means of righting the wrong, but also the humor of the situation, and so lighten the tension of the whole predicament by an appeal to the risibilities."

MAN: "But these occasions demand the will to see, evidently. Oh, will, how great thou art! And thou hast been enslaved too long!"

CROCUS: "Politics are liable to become exceedingly savage, but Abraham Lincoln was able to allay the irritation in many a strained situation by a humorous anecdote that was more convincing than a volume of argument. The modern cartoon is Lincolnonian in this particular. In religion, also, notwithstanding the commonly accepted notion to the contrary, there is a real opportunity for humor. Elijah was occasionally humorously sarcastic, and Paul in one of his epistles breaks out into a scathing irony that cuts like a knife. One of the most

pathetic things possible is a religion that destroys the sense of humor in its subjects, for when this is gone the soul has lost its balancing power. Man is a reasoning creature, but he is also 'an animal that laughs,' and when he has lost his sense of the ridiculous and his power to make merry, his reason is tottering. Childhood and health laugh, but there is no laughter in a mad-house."

MAN: "I can most heartily second this utterance of yours, Crocus, for it is self-evident that we would never have been given the power to laugh if we received it but to destroy it. My eyes were given me to see with, not to gouge out."

CROCUS: "But you must not depend on climate or circumstances to make you happy. These are but invitations to conquest. The house fly is a carrier of disease, the spider seeks poison, but the bee has but one object in life—the transportation of argosies of golden sweetness from the wild world of nature to the ceiled dining-rooms of civilized men. By grace of its redemptive power the soul has a like char-

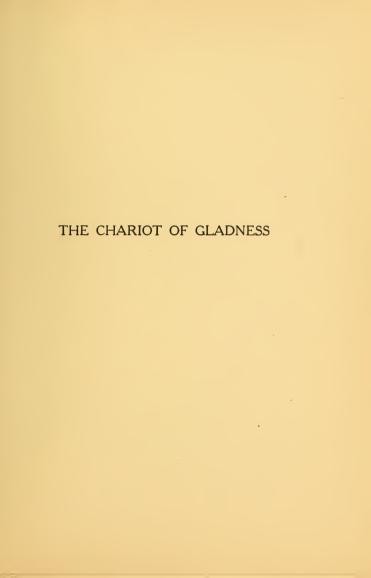
acteristic. It can gather strength from the most grievous wrong. It can overcome evil with good. It can extract sweetness from the bitterest plant that grows on the face of creation."

MAN: "O soul, soul, thou hast much land to be possessed! Go forth to conquer! Within thyself are regions vast that must be peopled with the joy civilization. Go, go!"

CROCUS: "Of what use is climate or locality to the Pauls, Bunvans, and Barnabases of a victorious race? The soul was made to be a monarch greater than the severest hardships, or the most luxurious ease. The soul is king. But in every kingdom there must be a chief executive officer, and here it is the will. And this officer needs to be a sort of Joseph-like despot that the throne may be stable. He needs to put into practical setting the dreams of his monarch for the preservation of his subjects. He must see that the corn is stored and, when the famine comes, that there be no waste in dealing it out. He must expel the brigands, punish the lawless, prod up the indolent, allay strife, reward the diligent, care for the poor, and

create harmony in the whole domain. The king has placed him in this position that the throne may enjoy peace at home and abroad. He is the king's thane, and his duty is to carry out the pleasure of his royal master. But in all his activities his chief business is to make his monarch glad, that he may sit with joy upon his throne."





Mountain gorses, ever-golden,
Cankered not the whole year long!
Do ye teach us to be strong,
Howsoever pricked and holden
Like your thorny blooms and so
Trodden on by rain and snow,
Up the hillside of this life,
As bleak as where ye grow?

E. B. Browning: "Lessons from the Gorse."



XVII

THE CHARIOT OF GLADNESS

AN: "Crocus, I wish you would sing for me. Your voice is so sweet in conversation that I am sure it would ravish my soul in song."

CROCUS: "I will sing for you sometime in your dreams when your window is open toward my plot. Meanwhile, I must tell you my story before your ear gets so heavy with the noise of men that you cannot hear my voice. You speak of singing. This is a perfect vehicle of gladness. As laughter is the natural way of expressing appreciation of humorous thoughts, so song is the best expression of joy. Not only so, but it acts as a guard against danger. Pouring out the soul in carols of praise will never fail to dispel the tempter. Evil cannot exist except where wicked thoughts

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

are dwelt upon, and such quickly take flight at the breath of Christian song."

MAN: "Indeed, this must be true. Who could commit any crime while singing

'Guide me, O thou great Jehovah!
Pilgrim through this barren land:
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
Hold me with thy powerful hand.
Strong Deliverer,
Be thou still my strength and shield'?"

CROCUS: "Song is also a powerful nerve stimulant. Stammering, of which there are said to be over four hundred thousand cases in your own country, is a nervous trouble. Emotion, fear, anger, embarrassment, all increase this difficulty and in many cases entirely account for it. All stammerers can sing without hinderance from their infirmity, and thus the start is made toward overcoming it entirely. From this beginning in expressing the thoughts in songs of praise the mind is helped, the nervous condition is counteracted, confidence is

aroused, and the foundation of a stable control of the organs of speech is laid."

MAN: "Wonderful! But as I think of it, other infirmities, into which very many of us mortals occasionally fall, often may be driven away by a song of the Kingdom. I speak of the infirmities of a sharp tongue, a scowling face, a lowering look, and impatient actions."

CROCUS: "You speak truly. But you will find that you will not want to sing under such conditions. You will need to will to do so. But to do this is the very height of wisdom. Oftentimes, too, the spiritual depression that comes through physical weariness can be dispelled by a song. Our very world is founded on praise. Your life is abundant or lacking in power according to the sufficiency or deficiency of that feeling whose natural expression is in songs of thanksgiving. The Psalmist commands, saying, 'Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely."

MAN: "Manifestly, this means that we are

to do it even if we do not feel in the mood for a carol, 'trampling under foot,' as John Wesley says, 'that enthusiastic doctrine, that we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it.'"

CROCUS: "That man used his will to drive on with. And the world is richer in both songs and salvation because he lived."

MAN: "The other day as I passed a black-smith-shop I was arrested by a burst of vocal music from within. Stepping in, I enjoyed it to the end of the fourth verse, for the singer had a magnificent bass voice, and when the grimy smith had finished the song I said, 'You seem to be happy. Things must be going prosperously with you?' 'Well, hardly,' said the man at the forge. 'Then what are you singing for?' I demanded, wonderingly. 'For the very reason that they look so black. Any fool can sing when the sun shines. I sing to keep away the blues where ordinarily you would expect a chap to swear.'"

CROCUS: "The seven Greek sages collectively could not have given a better answer than that. Singing a song, even when one does

not feel like it and does it wilfully, oftentimes brings the peace that song is supposed to be the expression of. That is to say, uttering a song of praise, even when there is no praise in the heart, will generate the spirit of praise. If you are discouraged, it is because you have been looking down. Look up, once, even though you have to lift great weights to do so, and an angel will drop a song on your lips, in uttering which, a responsive melody will awake in your soul and the victory has been won."

MAN: "A stage-driver was in the habit of whipping one of his horses at a particular point in the road in the climb of a steep hill. A passenger who had seen this repeated many times finally asked the driver the reason for it. 'You see that big white rock, over there?' said he, 'Well that off horse always used to shy at that, but I concluded that I would give him something else to think about, and so I touch him with the whip and that takes his mind off shying.' Does this illustrate something of your meaning, Crocus?"

Crocus: "Splendidly. Men as well as 187]

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

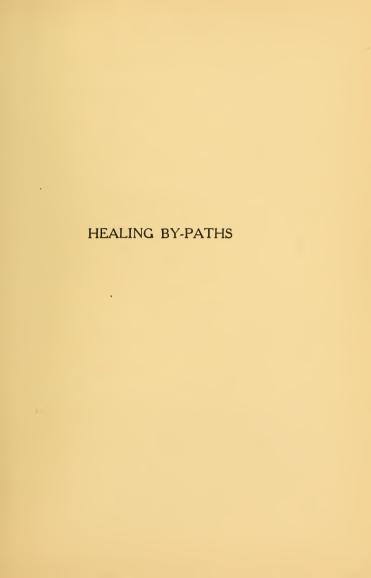
horses need gentle hints for their own good, and men are oftentimes as foolish as horses. They shy at providences that have within them nothing but blessing. But whip your lips to sing when the clouds are dark, and see how soon the sun will shine."

Man:

"Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face."

CROCUS: "You men do one thing that I do not like,—lay snares to capture song-birds for your cages. But I give you free license to entrap the seraphs of praise whom you wish to dwell in your hearts, by any possible contrivance of musical chords, or concord of sweet sounds. Goods thoughts are borne on the wings of song and, meanwhile, the climb up the hill of difficulty is made easier. When you are depressed try singing snatches of the Hallelujah Chorus.





And the stately lilies stand
Fair in the silvery light,
Like saintly vestals, pale in prayer;
Their purple breath sanctifies the air,
As its fragrance fills the night.

Julia C. R. Dorr: "A Red Rose."



XVIII

HEALING BY-PATHS

AN: "I have just come home from the wonderfully beautiful Etag Nedlog Park, Crocus, where I took my babies for an outing. I think I en-

joyed it as much as the children, and my wife says that I acted like a boy of ten let out of school. But what delightful lanes and by-paths there are, leading off from the main thoroughfares, wherein one may wander and find shady dells and restful nooks to comfort a jaded mind."

CROCUS: "As the by-paths leading off from life's dusty highway are a blessing, so may it be said of the world's by-products, both physical and spiritual. The by-products of our great industries are coming to be recognized, in many cases, as of more value than the main

product. Coal-tar, which but a little time ago was considered but an offensive waste product in the distillation of gas from coal, at present constitutes the source of innumerable substances of the greatest value to both science and the industries. Indeed, carbolic acid has become so necessary to the medical world that this product of a by-product in itself is worth more than the main product is in its illuminating value. And when you take into account the coal-tar colors, the aniline and alizarine dves, a long list of them, a wonder-worker is found. Think of the spread of disease that carbolic acid has halted. Consider the dull gray world that the coal-tar colors have lightened up. And these are but two of the supplemental products of a single by-product."

MAN: "Go to the flower, thou thoughtless; consider her words, and be wise."

CROCUS: "But in the spiritual realm there is yet a more startling discovery. 'As Jesus passed by' His attention was called to some great human need, when His divine remedy

was brought into use to the joy of all concerned. 'As Jesus passed by' the man born blind was given his sight, the widow of Nain's son was raised from the dead, the centurion's servant was healed, the sick of the palsy took up his bed and walked, the dumb man spake, the disciples were called and the multitude fed from a lad's meager lunch. Can it be possible that the greater part of the miracles of the Master were performed as a sort of by-product?"

MAN: "So it would seem."

CROCUS: "Is it possible that the supreme mission of life may become, in its practical outcome of the moment, but a subsidiary thing, and the by-the-way events the real issue? Is it not conceivable that the real purpose of existence may be buttressed and strengthened by the incidents that are made pregnant with blessing by the way? May not Calvary have been more potent in its redemptive qualities because Jesus left the main trunk-line of His high destiny and entered the side streets of Nain and Jericho, 'and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon'?

May not you average mortals give a more healthful report of life as you pass by, and yet not block your life mission?"

MAN: "Who can doubt it?"

CROCUS: "The race is said to be living the pace that kills. The whole face of the globe is being changed by human activity. Projects of startling proportions are being initiated every hour. You circumnavigated the globe but a few days ago: you shouted ten thousand leagues under the sea, by means of a wire trumpet, the day following: to-day you are receiving messages from the uttermost parts of the earth and sea with no apparent agent or instrumentality but the wind; to-morrow you will be flying with better wings than the eagles own: the next day you will converse with the Martians: and the day after you will, doubtless, take that trip to the moon which a slight error in reckoning defeated for your boyhood friend and idol."

MAN: "They have sought out many inventions' is the calm verdict of the wise man."

CROCUS: "The writer whom you were reading the other day interested me where he

said: 'The rate of increase of the scope of practical control over nature accelerates so that no one can trace the limits; one may even fear that the being of man may be crushed by his own powers, that his fixed nature as an organism may not prove adequate to stand the strain of the ever increasing, tremendous functions, which his intellect will more and more enable him to wield. He may drown in his wealth like a child in a bath-tub, who has turned on the water and who cannot turn it off.'"

MAN: "But, as a friend once said to Samuel Johnson, I, too, have sometimes tried to be a philosopher, but cheerfulness would break in!"

CROCUS: "You can say this because you have imbibed the calm view of the Gospel and know what it has to give as a preventive of commercial suicide. Without that, self-destruction is not only possible but probable. But with the wisdom that cometh down from above you will learn how to adapt the old convolutions of the brain to the new gyres of the external brain of man as seen in the external world.

When one has built a great drive-wheel to a monster machine the temptation is for the creative mind to stay with the engine, revolve with the wheel. He cannot get away from the primitive notion that the machine eternally needs his presence. But here you must raise your everlasting no. If you have built your mind into a giant turbine you will say to that mind, crystallized into steel: 'Now do your work and do not trouble me. I have other things to attend to. My largest task is the perfecting of my own enginery. See to it that you do not bring your hydraulic pressure to bear upon me to drown my personality instead of your own parts. I must not have water on my brain as you.' And I think I hear the dignified answer of the great steel giant: 'You attend to your task, O maker of me, and I will lift my burdens and vours, alone."

MAN: "I am following you. Lead on now into the restful shadows of the by-path."

CROCUS: "But the command of the giant machine is impossible of execution unless there shall be some by-path into which we may stroll.

No man can walk always upon the main traveled highway of industry and toil without his brain becoming paralyzed with the interminable lengths which stretch out ahead. He must ever and again take the trails that lead out into the restful woods and by the cooling "Tis looking downward makes one dizzy,' and the round of toil has the downward look. A man needs to look away from self and human products up to the word and works and person of God. He must bathe his soul in that philosophy of the Eternal which developed our great fathers and mothers and which the Nazarene founded for just such an age as this. This philosophy of God great men have named 'The World Religion,' and it is well named."

MAN: "Still, the way is lined with stores and factories, but I see the woods yonder."

CROCUS: "Jesus taught that one might have the consciousness of the Heavenly Father's presence, and that is sufficient to calm any tempest and bring peace to the soul. The knowledge that 'the high and lofty One that inhab-

iteth eternity' has interests in the son of man sufficient to visit him, has wondrous power. The realizing effect in practical experience is transforming to the point of revolution. The heart of flesh for the heart of stone is no mere imagery. The results are measured only in the scale of character. The product of this true religion is joy, though this does not exhaust the catalogue, since the fruit is of many varieties, and the by-product is a healthy body, a clear brain, success in business, and prosperity in the home."

MAN: "Ah, now we have come where the flowers are blooming and the living waters go singing between their leafy banks."

CROCUS: "I repeat, the by-product of Jesus' gospel is wholesomeness, health of mind and body. I do not mean to say that joy will restore a person who has wasted his substance in riotous living, his body in riotous labor, any more than it will restore a maniac to sanity. Oil will save a machine from wear if it is used from the beginning, but if you wait until it is all

but worn out before the application is made, it cannot, of course, make it new again. The oil of joy from the beginning, in a normal human setting, will give long life and a healthy one. But if its use is deferred until late it cannot be expected to more than make the old machine go less haltingly. However, when the joy of the Lord has restored the sick soul, there is a wonderful change in the sick body. The healthy mind, as it thinks pure and sweet, joyful and loving, thoughts will clear out the filth from the soul, and to a greater or less extent from the body as well, even as the water turned in to flush the sewer cleanses and purifies that underground highway."

MAN: "'Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and His wonderful works to the children of men."

CROCUS: "Joy brings health of body and mind wherever it can reach. I do not mean great excitement; that is not joy but intoxication. Moderation is the foundation of joy everywhere."

MAN: "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

CROCUS: "Wise men do not risk investments that insure twenty per cent. Large promises are of doubtful value anywhere. Your brilliant Emerson tells of a witty orator who likened political promises to Western roads which start out well, with broad thoroughfares and beautiful shade-trees upon either side, but which grow narrower and narrower and finally turn into a squirrel path and run up a tree. The promises of physical gratification have similar characteristics. But the soul is more veracious, and you who have learned your lesson seek your compensations in the realm of the commonplace. The joy of the simple life of love and usefulness is great and lasting."

MAN: "In the spirit of your teaching, with the program of the Galilean as mine, I feel that I shall be able to meet the fierce conflict of my day and not fail, that I shall have strength to 'run through a troop and leap over a wall.'"

CROCUS: "Whoever denies that the chief

HEALING BY-PATHS

content of the Gospel is joy has forgotten the prophet's commission to the Master, 'to comfort all that mourn, to give beauty for ashes, and oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.'"





Hope smiled when your nativity was cast, Children of summer!

Wordsworth: "Flowers on the Top of the Pillars at the Entrance of the Cave."



XIX

THE MAGIC OF CONFIDENCE

ROCUS: "There is a spirit that is native to the flowers which I find lacking in most mortals. You call it confidence. It is a mighty power,

with wonder-working attributes. You may prove its genuineness by the way it faces danger and death."

MAN: "I have heard about this. It is affected by the immature and the young. I have not found it often commended, as I remember, by the wisest teachers."

CROCUS: "You mistake me. I do not mean 'cocksureness,' that narrow-horizoned attribute of small minds and ignorant souls. Such are always quite sure of every step of the way and point out proofs and demonstrations without number. 'Of such turn aside.' Flee youth-

205]

ful 'sure philosophy.' 'The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err' in finding the way of faith to God, but the traveler, though a sage, 'shall not by searching find out God.' It may be easy to put yourself into the hands of your Heavenly Father for Him to know you, but to get God into the hands of a man so he can know Him is a matter for another mold. Job had much to say about failing to find God in the whole circle of experience, but when he had vainly searched on all sides he could come back to the sublime statement, 'But He knoweth the way that I take.' That is confidence."

MAN: "I begin to see something of your meaning."

CROCUS: "'The man who knows' is not necessarily infallible. The greatest men, in the details of life, are not positively certain. They are following after, if by any means they may apprehend. They are not yet made perfect in knowledge. There is a vast difference between confidence and 'cocksureness.' The one is like a full flask without a stopple into which the

water is always pouring so that it continually overflows and the contents is continually being renewed. The other is like an empty bottle closely corked so that nothing may enter it. The first is humble that he knows so little. The second is proud because he knows so much!"

MAN: "I would not be 'cocksure,' but I would I could be confident."

CROCUS: "When Jesus returned from the mountain of transfiguration He reproved the disciples for their unbelief. 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed,' said He, 'ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove.' I am convinced that the Master did not intend His disciples to organize a mountain-moving corporation. He was not on earth to initiate great engineering enterprises. Men had erected the pyramids before He came, by the toil of their hand, and they would build monuments to death, after He had gone, by the sweat of their brow. He was not to make life easier so far as work is concerned. He was not entering the field

of labor-saving machinery. His declaration was simply that men needed life, and if their life was measured by the size of a mustard seed, yet, because it was a living thing, to pit it against a mountain of dead matter meant that it would conquer. In the battle between the mustard seed and the mountain the mountain is out-flanked at the start."

MAN: "And was there not some sad irony, too, in the Master's words?"

CROCUS: "Doubtless. But the real thought is here. The life which begins with a genuine consciousness of the presence of God in the world, He likens to the smallest of common seeds. This seed the theologians call conversion. But when it has germinated and grown into a great tree so that the birds of the air build their nests in the branches—or, in other words, when faith fills the whole sky like the branches of a tree—then it has become confidence, a settled and established conviction of the certainty and stability of God's supreme control in the whole order of existence."

Man: "Doubtless it was in this frame of mind that Browning sang

'God's in his heaven— All's right with the world.'"

CROCUS: "It must be so. Your confident one dares venture out beyond the limits of his vision, not recklessly, which means upon his own responsibility, but because he is sure of God. He is sure of his God and in the light of His countenance he has found himself. His soul is united within itself, every faculty obedient to its ruler, all the attributes harmonious, the whole being a unit complete in the full selfgrasp of conscious personality so that in any crisis it might be said of him. 'He is all there.' To such a one Confidence says, 'Whatsoever you desire for good is yours. You have but to stretch forth your hand and take it.' The world would have perished long ago had it not been for the noble souls who calmly demanded of life those things which would benefit the race. Literature is full of allusions to men, and women too, who stamped their age with a calm

belief in the foundations of the universe and then met death with a clear-eyed faith, without a quiver of fear, aye, often with smiling raillery. Such was Socrates, who laughed death to scorn; such was Sir Thomas More, who on the scaffold sported with the ax that was to take his life; and such were Dorigen and her noble husband, Sophocles, the Duke of Athens, of whom his conqueror and executioner, Martius, could say:

'This admirable duke,
With his disdain of fortune and of death,
Captived himself, hath captivated me,
And though my arm has ta'en his body here,
His soul hath subjugated Martius' soul.
By Romulus, he is all soul, I think;
He hath no flesh, and spirit can not be gyved;
Then we have vanquished nothing; he is free,
And Martius walks now in captivity.'"

MAN: "O God, help me, as others have, only to know Thee, and then all else may be but driftwood. With my soul anchored in Thee, nothing shall make me afraid, nothing shall be impossible."



Bright and glorious is that revelation,
Written all over this great world of ours;
Making evident our own creation,
In these stars of earth, these golden flowers.

In all places, then, and in all seasons,
Flowers expand their light and soul-like wings,
Teaching us, by most persuasive reasons,
How akin they are to human things.

And with childlike, credulous affection
We behold their tender buds expand;
Emblems of our own great resurrection,
Emblems of the bright and better land.

Longfellow: "Flowers."



XX

THE LANGUAGE OF TWO WORLDS

ROCUS: "The conclusion of the whole matter, son of man, is that life is to be glad. While there are, doubtless, dismal situations enough, the

glory of man is that God could speak through him and say to all his fellows, 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.' Being sad because you have fallen on perilous times does not help to lay a rope for wrong or build a temple for justice. But being glad will at least keep the fire burning in your own heart; it will do more, it will drive away the gloom from a whole neighborhood."

MAN: "You will have done much more than this, Crocus, for I expect your soul-lightening words to bless a continent."

CROCUS: "I will have but handed on to you what was given to me. But hear this experience. The Philippian iail in the first century A. D., was not a place where a company of men would choose to give a sacred concert. But Paul and Silas did not stop to compute the height of prison walls or the weight of dungeon doors. To them any place was the ante-room of heaven. So they 'sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them.' These were strange sounds, no doubt, to the broken-spirited captives cowed by their shackles. But there were men in that prison that night whom no chains could curb. The jailer might put them in the inner prison and make their feet fast in the stocks, and they might well understand that the whole town was against them and the highest authority had ordered their incarceration: but what did they care? Their business was to serve God and rejoice at any turn in the road, and they did. Their souls were not bound and their God was not in captivity, so the song that broke forth from their lips was strong enough to burst their prison walls."

MAN: "I never weary of hearing that story. I would that all men were like these."

CROCUS: "Their motto was 'Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks.' I doubt not that any who are true in life to such a motto will duplicate their experiences. But you must live the Pauline life, which was his greatest sermon, and have the Pauline faith, which was his greatest asset—he had no other property!—if you would be a man before whom prison walls shall crumble. Some men have demonstrated the fact that hardship is only the shell of life, for the beetling walls of a prison on that night of nights inclosed a corner of heaven."

MAN: "If men would risk as much to discover joy as they do in their search for gold, there would scarcely be an unhappy mortal on earth."

CROCUS: "And yet there is no risk to be run. Everywhere there are opportunities to find joy. Shared sorrows lighten two hearts, and a partnership in dispelling gloom is a universal necessity. If I may change the figure, joy is the

language of heaven and eternity, but you have been given the task to learn it while you measure your lives by the tick of the clock. Unless you wish to be dumb there, you would better learn this language here."

MAN: "I have heard much of speaking in tongues, but from what you have told me I had rather speak in the vernacular of joy than master all the dialects of earth, or be given miraculous power to speak them."

CROCUS: "Therein are you wise. But listen. A negro who had been converted through the work of a missionary in his native land met another member of the black race as he landed from the steamer at Port Said after coming up the Suez Canal. They were from different parts of the Dark Continent, and neither spoke the other's language. But the first saw something in the other's face which made him feel that he had found a brother, and putting out his hand he said, 'Hallelujah!' The other, grasping it while a broad smile rippled over his whole face, responded, 'Amen!' They knew not a word of each other's earthly speech,

neither did they realize that they had been introduced to each other by means of ancient Hebrew, a dead language, but they did know that each had discovered, independently of the other and in far separated countries, the universal language of God; and they had that day proved its universality."

MAN: "These men may have black skins, but if they can speak the language of heaven I think they will get in."

CROCUS: "The Gospel of the Lord Christ is the World Religion, because it has within it the universal element. 'He hath set eternity in their heart.' That state of mind and heart which is a product of the Gospel and which is described when we say happiness, blessedness, joy, is the earnest of everlasting life. Heaven is heaven because of the joy it contains, and the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, which we all yearn to see, will bring that joy to be the rule and not the exception.

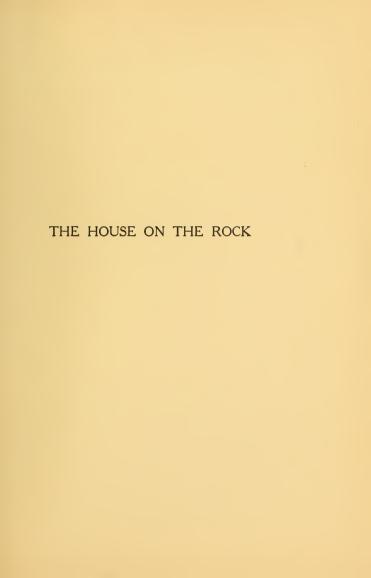
MAN: "But how may I make sure of entering into the Kingdom of Joy on high?"

CROCUS: "By becoming responsible for 217]

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

the creation of a corner of heaven on a corner of the earth. You will know the heavenly language then, and you will make certain of your admission by taking some one with you."

MAN: "And may they not enter but by two and two?"



Hail to the King of Bethlehem, Who weareth in his diadem The yellow crocus for the gem Of his authority!

Longfellow: "Christus. The Golden Legend."



XXI

THE HOUSE ON THE ROCK

AN: "Crocus, I feel as though I had been on the mountain with God, and His prophet had been speaking to me, making plans with me for

my eternal building."

CROCUS: "'And look that thou make it after the pattern which was showed thee in the mount."

MAN: "May I be true to the splendid model that has been given me by the master spirit of the flowers."

CROCUS: "But you will need to use care. All about you are to be found unfortunates seeking health and happiness, riches and success, without the faintest possibility of their ever succeeding. Why? 'Do men gather grapes of

221]

thorns, or figs of thistles?' Peter has somewhat to say about men becoming partakers of the divine nature. This evidently is the clue. But your race has been seeking luscious fruit among the dead leaves of the dying limbs of a decadent trunk. Is it any wonder that they fail to find life? Jesus was very explicit about this matter. The most learned doctor among the Jews was severely rebuked because he did not know the fundamental fact of the life of God in man. And what is that fact? That life, as it has come to us, is loaded down with animal instincts that have outlived their usefulness."

MAN: "Then 'the call of the wild' is no mere myth or dream?"

CROCUS: "Not at all. There is a primordial beast in man. The lower instincts were needed in the days of the survival of the fittest, when that had reference to physical development, but the foundation having been laid for the masterpiece, there is need for something more. One comes declaring that this is to be a divine lift in life. To the animal nature has

been added the human mind. Now intellect must be supplemented by the divine nature."

MAN: "Ah, I see. 'Ye must be born from above' as ye have been from beneath."

CROCUS: "This is the foundation stone of all human progress. The only way out is forward; the only way forward is upward; the only way upward is Godward, and Godward is homeward. Man's home is on high."

Man: "Lead me gently homeward, Father."

CROCUS: "Here, as everywhere, the downward look makes dizzy but the upward gaze gives life. The diligent student of life who is satisfied simply to drag the bottom of human existence for proofs of the truth of the upward climb from the depths below loses the subtle sense of a higher realm, but he who flies his kite to capture flashes of light from heaven on spiritual biogenesis, though at the same time searching the darkness below, becomes strong-souled and far-seeing."

MAN: "I follow you. I remember that

Darwin confessed with bitter sorrow the decline of his spiritual faculty, while Drummond, as eager a student of biology as the other, never ceased to look up."

CROCUS: "You have thought that you were the first to hear the voice of the flowers. but you have not that distinction. Numbers of men have heard the pleadings of my fellows and have come to their relief and helped them to a higher plane. Over in California lives one of these remarkable men and he is known as the 'wizard gardener.' He takes the commonest plant and infuses into it something of his own intelligence, and forthwith, in place of being useless it now becomes one of the utilities. The thorny cactus of the desert meets this master mind on a sunshiny day and, after long, protracted interviews with him, reluctantly gives up its spines, promises to mend its ways, and becomes food for man and beast. The transformation was made by man coming down to the vegetable kingdom, entering in and leaving something of himself. Satan's temptation of Eve was that if they ate they would become

gods, since he had climbed out of brutehood that way:

'I of brute human, ye of human gods.'"

MAN: "But the message of the Gospel is not of this complexion."

CROCUS: "Not at all. It is not by feeding the bodily organism that the transformation is made in the real nature of man. It is the personal God entering into the kingdom of man and transforming it into the higher. This is the marvelous power of life. It is always the power from above that descends into the lower realm and lifts the object of desire into the higher country. 'The passage from the mineral world to the plant or animal world is hermetically sealed on the mineral side.' But mysterious life has power to break the seal and open the door. Life coming down from the flower transforms the mineral into the gorgeous rose, the wax-like lily, or the blood-red carnation. Life coming down from the dumb brute transmutes the vegetable into the strong-limbed Norman draft-horse or swift Arab charger. And though the scientific world says, 'The passage from the natural world to the spiritual world is hermetically sealed on the natural side.'"

MAN: "Yet the lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the seven seals, and the Church for these many years has sung a new song to Him, saying, 'Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.'"

CROCUS: "You took it from my lips. The divine life of the Son of God comes down into human hearts, and behold a Paul who was called Saul; a John who was one of the 'soon angry' brothers; a Peter, the rock, who was Simon, the reckless; a Luther, a Wesley, a William Taylor, a Jerry McCauley,—all were made a blessing who, otherwise, might have been a curse."

MAN: "The Germans say that we should not go to the second thing first. But I fear that we have not been following that good advice."

CROCUS: "First, the stable foundation, if the Palace Beautiful is to follow, and the foundation is built of God. 'By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast."

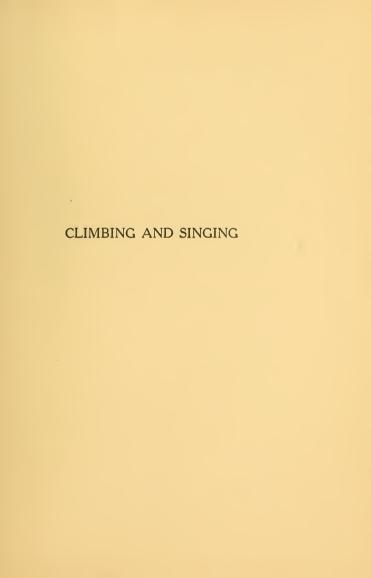
MAN: "And we have been trying to erect great stately buildings without this foundation! I doubt if a 'woodshed' could be built on the foundation some men have been laying!"

CROCUS: "And what is true of throwing together a 'shack' cannot be false in the construction of a cathedral. You cannot begin covering the roof before you have put in the girders. A story once drifted to my ears from the street corner down yonder of a man on the Atlantic coast who went out, on a very foggy morning, to finish the shingling of his barn, and before the sun had worn away the mists sufficiently for him to see what he was doing, he had shingled forty feet out on to the fog!"

MAN: "That is a remarkable experience, Crocus, and coming from any one but you would be taken with a grain of salt!"

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

CROCUS: "But there are many of you mortals who are attempting a like feat in your search for peace of mind and health of body; seeking to build a roof of happiness without anything for it to rest upon except the misty fogs of fine phrases and the dreams that are born of your fond desires."



To chase the clouds of life's tempestuous hours,
To strew its short but weary way with flowers,
New hopes to raise, new feelings to impart,
And pour celestial balsam on the heart.
Thomas Love Peacock: "The Visions of Love."



XXII

CLIMBING AND SINGING

CROCUS: "This is the last morning that I shall be able to talk with you, son of man.

My petals are fast fading and I must go. But I have a few

words more before I close my eyes, a few admonitions that I trust you will heed."

MAN: "I grieve that you must go. But I praise your Maker and mine that my ears have been open to your wonderful story."

CROCUS: "My time draws to a close and I must hasten. Listen. The Master is standing just over there, just there. Step a little this way; that will do. You see Him now. Like Life, He too, will not obtrude Himself upon any who do not desire His company."

MAN: "But I have invited Him to do the work."

231]

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

CROCUS: "Very good. Then we know that the foundation has been built, and now the superstructure must be undertaken. Do not expect Him to do the work for you now that the firm base has been laid. He is the Master Builder and will always be within call to aid in the enterprise, but there is much responsibility for the workmen. You are now building a great temple that is to stand 'when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll.' With such a task no trivial things should call you from your work. Like the godly Nehemiah, when anger and pride, when envy and hatred, when worry and fear, come trooping to find your building site, send messengers to them while they are yet a great way off who shall speak for you and say, 'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.' You will not surrender to these invaders, nor will vou allow them to be vour associates in the enterprise."

MAN: "'Looking unto Jesus' shall be my shibboleth."

CROCUS: "The early fathers talked thus.

To them this was all there was to the Christian life. But you, how otherwise you have been living. For shame, you have been looking to the climate, the landscape, the food of your table for happiness and success. These are only the result of chemical combinations. And is life nothing but a chemical precipitate? Does some would-be wise man say that by analvsis a man can be resolved into so much H₂O, so many parts Ca₃ (PO₄)₂, so many carbonates, nitrates, and the rest? If this were true it had been better that you had never been born, or else been given the form of any beast, or bird, or fish, or better vet, of flower. If the physical is all, and there is no spiritual realm. matter is mind undeveloped and conscience a nightmare among your dreams, then there is no good or bad, but all is perfectly indifferent. If God is not, then man is not, and his loftiest ideals are but dust and ashes blown by nonexistent winds from whirling and burning worlds whose fires were never lighted."

MAN: "But there is a spiritual world, there is an Almighty God, and I am an immortal 2331

soul. He who believes otherwise has to produce evidence that can no more be substantiated than that two and two can be tortured into making five."

CROCUS: "And if God is, all else becomes fair. When the mind rests back on the eternal Father the heart keeps holiday."

MAN: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee,' I know, O God."

CROCUS: "I cannot conceive of a man being wretched who can sing all along the way. I cannot make real the idea of an unsuccessful man who is always running over with good cheer. I can hardly allow myself to believe it possible to find a sick man who has always obeyed the command to be filled with joy."

MAN: "'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, yea my God.'"

CROCUS: "But let me warn you that you must not expect everything to be begun, con-

tinued, and ended before the first day has seen its close. It has been reported to me that some believe that when a man is what you call converted, the whole of life is conquered. Is the foundation the whole structure? The building of character is 'a long victory.' While it is true 'when the fight begins within, a man's worth something,' he must prolong that battle through his life; never leave growing till the life to come. You have been given the secret, you have begun to build. Go on in the same way and life is won wherever it may find a footing."

MAN: "I am determined so to do, the Lord being my helper."

CROCUS: "Look up, then, look up and face the eternal morning. 'Tis looking downward makes one dizzy.' Be not discouraged at the slowness of your progress. It was said of your Master, 'He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He hath set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for His law.'"

MAN: "He failed not and I will not; for I must carry His glorious law of liberty and love to these waiting isles and continents. Yes,

I must carry the message to them for their sake, but on my own behalf as well, for if I do not I shall have no cup of joy for myself. God takes the cup out of the hand that would hold it to one's own lips always. I must see to it, also, that the goblet is filled with joy and not with something else, some baser thing, or what is the use of carrying it at all? But if I have real joy, it is joy to the world and to my soul as well. And why should I not be glad?"

CROCUS (faintly and far off):

"'The king of love my Shepherd is, Whose goodness faileth never; I nothing lack if I am His, And He is mine forever.'"

MAN: "And He is mine as well. Then be gone, fear and doubt! Off with you, wolves of worry! Distrust, sadness, gloom, and melancholy, leave me, get you gone, go! Stand not on the order of your going, but depart at once! Come, angels of peace, seraphs of song, messengers of joy, ambassadors of love, come and dwell with me. The twelve broad gates of my soul shall ever be wide open for you.

Enter, friends of my youth, enter and abide. And now that you have come I will never let you go again. No, you shall ever dwell with me. My home must always hold you. And with you here I shall never more be lonely. All my friends will now be glad to visit me, for with joy they, too, would be on familiar terms. How rich life is when one has such company! How good God is when my soul is glad! Then I will always be glad, so that the light of His countenance may ever be lifted up upon me. Let those who are ready to perish look down. I will look up."

In my ecstasy I had turned away from the Crocus and now I turned to talk again to the one I had learned to love so dearly. As I stepped forward to speak I was conscious of a strange feeling of loss. I looked at the flower and found that the petals were all withered and dead. "The Crocus has sung its swan song," said I. "But its story has renewed my soul." I moved to leave the garden, and just then a wonderful voice reached my ear, faint, but sweet as distant silver bells. Gradually I

THE STORY THE CROCUS TOLD

could distinguish words from the music which I managed finally to build into this sentence: "Your prophet has gone, but the prophet's Master is by your side. He will lead you safely—surely—home."







Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process. Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide Treatment Date: Oct. 2005

Preservation Technologies A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive Cranberry Township, PA 16066 (724) 779-2111

BV4501

One copy del. to Cat. Div.

38.5 E TOW

